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CASTE

An Original Comedy in Three Acts

By
T. W. ROBERTSON

Reprinted from the acting book used in the performances of the famous Boston Museum Company, by the courtesy of the late Annie M. Clarke, for many years its leading lady.

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CASTE

CHARACTERS

(*First production, Prince of Wales' Theatre, London, April 6, 1867.*)

George D'Alroy	*Frederick Younge.*
Captain Hawtree	*S. B. Bancroft.*
Eccles	*George Honey.*
Sam Gerridge	*John Hare.*
Marquise de St. Maur	*Sophia Larkins.*
Esther Eccles	*Lydia Foote.*
Polly Eccles	*Marie Wilton.*

(*First production in the United States, Old Broadway Theatre, August 5, 1867.*)

Hon. Geo. D'Alroy	*W. J. Florence.*
Captain Hawtree	*Owen Marlowe.*
Eccles	*William Davidge.*
Sam Gerridge	*Edward Lamb.*
Esther Eccles	*Henrietta Chanfrau.*
Polly Eccles	*Mrs. W. J. Florence.*
Marquise de St. Maur	*Mrs. G. H. Gilbert.*

(*First production in Boston, Howard Athenæum, September 2, 1867.*)

Hon. George D'Alroy	*H. G. Clarke.*
Captain Hawtree	*Harry Crisp.*
Eccles	*Mr. Keeler.*
Sam Gerridge	*Mr. Scallan.*
Marquise de St. Maur	*Mrs. Farren.*
Esther Eccles	*Cecile Rush.*
Polly Eccles	*Lillie Marden.*

(*First production at The Boston Museum, September 22, 1867.*)

Hon. George D'Alroy	*L. R. Shewell.*
Captain Hawtree	*J. A. Smith.*
Eccles	*William Warren.*
Sam Gerridge	*J. H. Ring.*
Esther Eccles	*Annie Clarke.*
Polly Eccles	*Louisa Meyers.*
Marquise de St. Maur	*Mrs. E. L. Davenport.*

(*Wallack's Theatre, New York, N. Y., November 8, 1875.*)

Hon. George D'Alroy	*H. J. Montague.*
Captain Hawtree	*C. A. Stevenson.*
Eccles	*George Honey.*
Sam Gerridge	*E. M. Holland.*
Esther Eccles	*Ada Dyas.*
Polly Eccles	*Effie Germon.*
Marquise de St. Maur	*Mme. Ponisi.*

(*Globe Theatre, Boston, Mass., November 8, 1875.*)

Hon. George D'Alroy	*John C. Cowper.*
Captain Hawtree	*Owen Marlowe.*
Eccles	*George Honey.*
Sam Gerridge	*J. H. Burnett.*
Esther Eccles	*Katherine Rogers.*
Polly Eccles	*Lillian Conway.*
Marquise de St. Maur	*Clara Fisher Maeder.*

(*Wallack's Theatre, New York, N. Y., October, 1889.*)

Hon. George D'Alroy	*Osmond Tearle.*
Captain Hawtree	*E. D. Ward.*
Eccles	*Charles Graves.*
Sam Gerridge	*Tom Robertson.*
Esther Eccles	*Rose Coghlan.*
Polly Eccles	*Florence Girard.*
Marquise de St. Maur	*Mme. Ponisi.*

(*Garrick Theatre, London, February 5, 1895.*)

Hon. George D'Alroy	*Forbes Robertson.*
Captain Hawtree	*W. L. Abington.*
Eccles	*G. W. Anson.*
Marquise de St. Maur	*Rose Leclercq.*
Esther Eccles	*Kate Rorke.*
Polly Eccles	*May Harvey.*
Sam Gerridge	*Gilbert Hare.*

(*Grand Theatre, London, October 16, 1896, Knickerbocker Theatre, New York, January 18, 1897, and Tremont Theatre, Boston, March 2, 1897.*)

Hon. George D'Alroy	*Frank Gilmore.*
Captain Hawtree	*Frederick Kerr.*
Eccles	*John Hare.*
Sam Gerridge	*Gilbert Hare.*
Marquise de St. Maur	*Susie Vaughan.*
Esther Eccles	*Mona K. Oram.*
Polly Eccles	*May Harvey.*

PREFACE

Of all the Robertson dramas probably "Caste" took the most decided hold on popular favor. Its sentimental story, its strongly drawn characters which allowed to half-a-dozen actors equally good opportunities in very different lines of business gave it an instant success.

It is doubtful if any other modern play was so many times performed and in so many different theatres within a year as was "Caste." At the time of its production there was not only no international copyright; there was no protection for a play of any sort, so that as soon as it had been played in London it was the property in fact, if not in honor, of any manager who would bother to take it.

"Caste" was first produced at the famous Prince of Wales' Theatre in the Tottenham Court Road, London, April 6, 1867, during the régime of the Bancrofts. Lester Wallack secured the manuscript of the play from the Bancrofts and prepared to produce it in New York in the following September. But he was anticipated in this production by W. J. Florence, who had committed the play to memory in London, and got it on the stage at the Broadway Theatre, then in Broome Street, August 5, 1867, the Wallack production being made in Brooklyn, September 2. Wallack's attempt to protect his prior rights by suit is a matter of history, the defeat of that manager and the legal triumph of Florence not speaking very well for the honor of the courts of that time.

No sooner was "Caste" successfully given in New York than it sprang into popularity everywhere. That was the time of the stock company, and the traveling company was practically unknown. Within the month of September, for example, the piece was played on four different stages in the city of Boston.

All through the sixties and seventies the piece continued a popular play, but with the disappearance of the stock company, it dropped out of sight until the popular English comedian, John Hare, who had created the rôle of Sam Gerridge, when the play was first produced in London, revived it during his tour of the States in 1896-97.

Probably the best Eccles that the American public has known was George Honey, who created the rôle in London and afterwards was seen in this country for several seasons in the same

part. Next to him in point of genuine humor was the Eccles of William Warren of the Museum. Mr. Honey had the advantage of Warren in knowing the type better. But the performances of both these men in this part will be remembered always with keen relish by all who were so lucky as to see them.

"Caste" has been called by those who wish to put a little contempt on it "a cup and saucer" drama. But as a play it will always remain a model of its kind. It is terse, well constructed, with capital acting opportunities, and absolutely no halt in its movement and interest. If it be in any sense really a "cup and saucer drama," it is a pity that some modern writers do not catch the trick.

The present edition is carefully compiled from the prompt book in use at the Boston Museum where the play enjoyed one of its most pronounced successes. Business, stage positions and the few traditional interpolations are preserved exactly as employed in that famous play house. In elaborating the business of the third act in the scene in which D'Alroy returns the description given by Mrs. Bancroft—the original Polly Eccles—in "On and Off the Stage" has been carefully followed.

M. A.

Boston, December, 1912.

PROPERTIES

ACT I.—Key ready at R. 3 E. Letters for postman. Box with ballet dress. Rasher of bacon and other packages for Polly. Cigar case for Hawtree. Teakettle on hob of fireplace. Letters for Esther in pocket of gown. Coins for George to give Eccles.

ACT II.—Cigarettes for George. Parasol for Polly. Decanter of claret and brandy and glass for Eccles on sideboard of inner room.

ACT III.—Box with ballet dress. Slate and pencil on table. Bundle of circulars in Sam's pocket. Coin in Polly's pocket. Coral in baby's cradle. Wine bottle for Eccles. Letter and check for Esther. Deal table at R. 3 E. for Sam. Ring for Sam. Baby's cloak and cap for Marquise. Sample of wall paper.

CASTE

ACT I

Scene.—*Home of the Eccles. Living-room in ground-floor apartment at Stangate. Large window with deep seat at* C., *back, overlooking street. Door* R. 3 E. *into hall, giving view of outer door when open. Door at* R. 1 E. *to kitchen. Fireplace at* L., *with mantel over it. Fire laid ready to light. At* L. C. *table with cover. Large chair at* R. *of it; two small chairs at* L. *of it. Against back drop, at* L. *of window, dresser covered with dishes. Bureau against wall* R., *between doors.*

LIGHTS full up.

(*As curtain rises slowly on empty stage* GEORGE D'ALROY *and* CAPTAIN HAWTREE *are seen to pass window from* L. *Handle of door* R. 3 E. *is tried, and voices heard outside. Key then heard to turn in lock.*)

GEO. (*opening door* R. 3 E. *and* entering, *followed by* HAWTREE). I told you so. The key was left under the mat in case I came. They're not back from rehearsal. (*Crosses* L., *to fireplace.*)

HAW. (*coming* C.; *looking around*). And this is the Fairy's Bower.

GEO. And this is the Fairy's fireplace; the fire is laid, I'll light it. (*Places hat and stick on table and lights fire with match from mantelpiece.*)

RED LIGHT gradually on at fireplace.

HAW. And this is the abode rendered blessed by her abiding. It is here that she dwells, walks, talks, eats and drinks. Does she eat and drink?

GEO. Yes, heartily. I've seen her.

HAW. And you are really spoons—case of true love—hit dead.

GEO. Right through. Can't live away from her. (*With elbow on other end of mantel up stage.*)

HAW. Poor old Dal! And you've brought me over the water to ——

GEO. Stangate.

HAW. Stangate—to see her for the same sort of reason that when a patient is in a dangerous state one doctor calls in another for a consultation.

GEO. Yes! Then the patient dies.

HAW. Tell us all about it. You know I've been away. (*Sits* R. *of table, leg on chair, hat on back of head, stick dangling aimlessly in his hand.*)

GEO. Well, then, eighteen months ago ——

HAW. Oh, cut that. You told me all about that. You went to the theatre and saw a girl in a ballet, and you fell in love.

GEO. Yes, I found out that she was an amiable, good girl ——

HAW. Of course. Cut that. We'll credit her with all the virtues and accomplishments.

GEO. Who worked hard to support a drunken father.

HAW. Oh, the father's a drunkard, is he? The father doesn't inherit the daughter's virtues.

GEO. No, I hate him.

HAW. Naturally, quite so, quite so.

GEO. And she, that is Esther, is very good to her younger sister. (*Sits at* L. *on edge of table.*)

HAW. The younger sister also angelic, amiable, accomplished, etc., etc.

GEO. Um, good enough, but got a temper, large temper! Well, with some difficulty I got to speak to her—I mean to Esther; then I was allowed to see her to her door here.

HAW. I know—pastry-cooks, Richmond dinner, and all that.

GEO. You're too fast. Pastry-cooks, yes—Richmond, no. Your knowledge of the world fifty yards round barracks misleads you. I saw her nearly every day, and I kept on falling in love; falling and falling, till I thought I should never reach the bottom. (*Walks to and fro.*) Then I met you.

HAW. I remember *the* night when you told me, but I knew it was only an amourette. However, if the fire is a conflagration, subdue it; try dissipation.

GEO. I have.

HAW. What success?

GEO. (*pausing* C.). None. Dissipation brought on bad health, and self-contempt, a sick head and a sore heart.

HAW. Foreign travel. Absence makes the heart grow stronger. Get leave and cut away.

GEO. I did get leave and I did cut away, and while away I was miserable, and a gone 'er coon than ever.

HAW. What's to be done?

GEO. Don't know. That's the reason I asked you to come over and see.

HAW. Of course, Dal, you're not such a soft as to think of marriage. You know what your mother is. Either you are going to behave properly, with a proper regard to the world, and all that, you know, or you're going to do the other thing. Now the question is, what do you mean to do? The girl is a nice girl no doubt, but as to your making her Mrs. D'Alroy the thing is out of the question.

GEO. Why, what should prevent me? (*Returns to place on table.*)

HAW. Caste! The inexorable law of caste. The social law, so becoming and so good, that commands like to mate with like, and forbids a giraffe to fall in love with a squirrel; that holds sentiment to be a dissipation, and demands the exercise of common sense from all.

GEO. But, my dear Bark ——

HAW. My dear Dal, all those marriages of people with common people are all very well in novels and in plays on the stage, because the real people don't exist, and have no relatives who exist, and no connections, and so no harm's done, and it's rather interesting to look at; but in real life, with real relations, and real mothers, and so forth, it's absolute bosh—it's worse; it's utter social and personal annihilation and individual damnation.

GEO. As to my mother, I haven't thought about her.

HAW. Of course not. Lovers are so damned selfish they never think of anybody but themselves.

GEO. My father died when I was three years old, and she married again before I was six, and married a Frenchman.

HAW. A nobleman of the most ancient families in France, of equal blood to her own; she obeyed the duties imposed upon her by her station, and by caste.

GEO. Still it caused a separation and a division between us, and I never see my brother because he lives abroad. Of course

the Marquise de St. Maur is my mother, and I look upon her with a sort of superstitious awe.

HAW. She's a grand Brahmin priestess.

GEO. Just so, and I know I'm a fool. Now you're clever, Bark, a little too clever, I think. You're paying your devoirs—that's the correct word, I think—to Lady Florence Carbury, the daughter of a Countess—she's above you, you've no title. Is she to forget *her* caste?

HAW. That argument doesn't apply; a man can be no more than a gentleman.

GEO. (*sauntering up stage to window*). "Kind hearts are more than coronets and simple faith than Norman blood."

HAW. Now, George, if you're going to consider this question from a point of view of poetry, you're off to no man's land, where I won't follow you.

GEO. No gentleman can be ashamed of the woman he loves, no matter what her original station—once his wife he raises her to his rank.

HAW. Yes. (*Rises and crosses* L.) He raises her—her—but her connections—her relatives. How about them?

Enter ECCLES, R. 3 E.

ECC. (entering). Polly!—Why the devil —— (*Rushes* C. *before he sees* GEORGE *and* HAWTREE; *assumes a deferential manner.*) Oh, Mr. D'Alroy, I didn't see you, sir. (GEORGE *comes down* C.) Good-afternoon—the same to you, sir, and many on 'em. (*Down* R.)

GEO. (*crossing to* HAWTREE). This is papa.

HAW. Ah! (*Leaning on corner of mantelpiece and scanning* ECCLES *through eye-glass.*)

GEO. (C.). Miss Eccles and her sister not returned from rehearsal yet?

ECC. (R.). No, sir, they have not; I expect 'em in directly. I hope you've been quite well since I saw you last, sir?

GEO. Quite, thank you; and how have you been, Mr. Eccles?

ECC. Well, sir, I have not been the thing at all. My 'ealth, sir, and my spirits is both broken. I am not the man I used to be—I am not accustomed to this sort of thing. I have seen better days—but they are gone, most like for ever. It's a melancholy thing, sir, for a man of my time of life to look back on better days that are gone most like for ever.

GEO. I dare say.

Ecc. Once proud and prosperous, I am now poor and lowly —once master of a shop, I am now, by the pressure of circumstances over which I have no control, driven to seek work and not find it. Poverty is a dreadful thing, sir, for a man as had once been well off.

Geo. I daresay.

Ecc. (*sighing*). Ah! sir, the poor and lowly is often hardly used. What chance has the working man?

Haw. (L.). None. (*Aside.*) When he don't work.

Ecc. We are all equal in mind and feeling.

Haw. (*aside*). I hope not.

Ecc. I am sorry, gentlemen, that I cannot offer you any refreshment, but luxury and me has long been strangers.

Geo. (*crossing to* Eccles, *taking him by arm and leading him up* R., *speaking aside to him*). I am very sorry for your misfortunes, Mr. Eccles. May I hope that you will allow me to offer you this trifling loan? (*Gives him half a sovereign.*)

Ecc. (*taking it*). Sir, you are a gentleman—one can tell a real gentleman, sir, with half a sov—I mean with half an eye—a real gentleman, and understand the natural emotions of the working man. (*Edges up toward door* R.) Pride, sir, is a thing as should be put down by the strong 'and of pecuniary necessity. I promised a friend to meet him at this time in the neighborhood, on a matter of business—so if you'll excuse me, sir.

Geo. With pleasure.

Ecc. (*at door*). Sorry to leave you, gentlemen—but ——

Geo. Don't stay on my account.

Haw. Don't mention it.

Ecc. Business is business. (*Opens door.*) The girls will be here directly. Good-afternoon, gentlemen.

Exit, R. 3 E.

Geo. (*up* C., *sighing with relief*). Ah!

Haw. The papa is not nice, but "Kind hearts are more than coronets, and simple faith than Norman blood." Poor George! I wonder what your mamma, the most noble the Marquise de St. Maur, would think of Papa Eccles. Come, Dal, allow that there is something in caste. Conceive that dirty ruffian, that rinsing of stale beer, that walking tap-room for a father-in-law. Go out in Central America. Forget her. (*Sits on table* L.)

Geo. (*down* C.). Can't.

HAW. You'll be wretched and miserable with her.

GEO. I'd rather be wretched with her than miserable without her. (HAWTREE *takes out cigar case.*) Don't smoke here.

HAW. (*surprised, with cigar-case open*). Why not?

GEO. She'll be coming in directly.

HAW. I don't think she'd mind. (*Takes out cigar.*)

GEO. I should; do you smoke before Lady Florence Carbury?

HAW. (*closing case*). Ha! you're suffering from a fit of the morals.

GEO. What is that?

HAW. The morals is a disease, like the measles, that attacks the young and innocent.

GEO. (*with temper*). You talk like Mephistopheles without the cleverness. (*Goes up to window and looks at watch.*)

HAW. I don't pretend to be a particularly good sort of fellow, nor a particularly bad sort of fellow. I suppose I'm about the average standard sort of thing, and I don't like to see a friend go down hill to the devil while I can put the drag on. Here is a girl of humble station, poor, and all that, with a drunken father, who evidently doesn't care how he gets money so long as he doesn't work for it. Marriage—pah! Couldn't the thing be arranged?

GEO. Hawtree, cut that. (*At window.*) She's here. (*Turns from window;* enter ESTHER ECCLES, R. 3 E. GEORGE *meets her at door; flurried at sight of her.*) Good-morning; I got here before you, you see.

(HAWTREE *rises and removes his hat.*)

EST. (*coming* R. C.). Good-morning.

GEO. I've taken the liberty—I hope you won't be angry—of asking you to let me present a friend of mine to you. Miss Eccles, Captain Hawtree.

(HAWTREE *advances and bows;* GEORGE *assists* ESTHER *in taking off bonnet and shawl, and places them on chair up stage.*)

HAW. (L. C., *aside*). Pretty!

EST. (*aside*). Thinks too much of himself.

GEO. You've had a late rehearsal. Where's Polly? (*They go up* C. *to window.*)

EST. She stayed behind to buy something.

Enter POLLY ECCLES, R. 3 E. *These two girls to be dressed alike—ballet girl's kiss-me-quick curls, etc.*

POL. (*crossing to table with packages; speaking as she passes* C.). Hallo, Mr. D'Alroy, how de do? Ah, I am tired to death. Kept at rehearsal by an old fool of a stage manager —but stage managers are always old fools—except when they're young ones. We shan't have time for any dinner, so I've brought something for tea, ham. (*Bangs ham in paper on table* L. C., *and seeing* HAWTREE, *pauses, eyes him, and laughs.*) Oh, I beg your pardon, sir, I didn't see you.

GEO. A friend of mine, Mary, Captain Hawtree. Miss Mary Eccles.

POL. (*behind table, aside*). What a swell! Got nice teeth, and he knows it. (*Takes off bonnet and shawl.*) How quiet we all are. Let's talk about something. (*She crosses to fire,* L., *round table front;* HAWTREE *comes round to* R. *of table.*)

EST. (*sitting in window*). What can we talk about?

POL. Anything. (*Bustles about, gets plates from dresser, and slips the ham from paper on it.*) Ham, Mr. D'Alroy? Do you like ham?

GEO. (*looking at* ESTHER). I adore her. (*All laugh.*) I mean I adore it.

POL. (*to* HAWTREE). Do you like ham, sir?

HAW. Yes. (*Sits at table and follows her with his eyes as she puts the dishes out.*)

POL. Now that is very strange. I should have thought you'd have been above ham.

HAW. Why? May I ask why?

POL. You look above it. You look quite equal to tongue-glazed. (*Laughs.*) Mr. D'Alroy is here so often that he knows our ways.

HAW. I like everything that is piquante and fresh, and pretty, and agreeable.

POL. Ah! you mean that for me. (*Curtseys.*) Oh! (*Sings.*) Tra, la lal la la! Now I must put the kettle on. (*Looks up stage at* ESTHER *and* GEORGE *in window. Sighs.*) Esther never does any work when Mr. D'Alroy is here. They're spooning. Ugly word, spoon, isn't it? Reminds me of red currant jam. By-the-bye, love is very like currant jam—at the first taste, sweet; afterward shuddery. Do you ever spoon? (*Leans toward him on* L. *of table.*)

HAW. I should like to do so at this moment.

POL. No, you're too grand for me. There's too much of you for me. You want taking down a peg—I mean a foot. Let's see, what are you, a corporal?

HAW. Captain.

POL. I prefer corporal. See here, let's change about. You be corporal—it'll do you good—and I'll be my lady.

HAW. Pleasure.

POL. You must call me my lady, though, or you shan't have any ham.

HAW. Certainly, my lady. But I cannot accept your hospitality, for I'm engaged to dine.

POL. At what time?

HAW. Seven.

POL. Seven! Why, that's half-past tea time. (*Turns to fireplace.*) Now, Corporal, you must wait on me.

HAW. As the pages did of old.

POL. (*lifting teakettle from hob*). My lady!

HAW. My lady.

POL. Here's the kettle. (*Comes round front of table.*) Corporal, take it into the back kitchen. (*Holds kettle out to him.*)

HAW. Eh!

POL. I'm coming too.

HAW. Oh, that alters the case. (*He takes kettle handle between finger and thumb.* POLLY *at* C. *majestically points the way.*)

GEO. What are you about?

HAW. About to fill the kettle. (*Holds it out at arm's length.*)

EST. (*to* POLLY). Mind what you are doing, Polly; what will Sam say?

POL. Whatever Sam chooses. What the sweetheart don't see the husband can't grieve at. Corporal!

HAW. My lady. (*Salutes with empty hand.*)

POL. Forward, march, and mind the soot don't drop upon your trousers.

Exeunt POLLY *and* HAWTREE, *door* R. 1 E.

EST. (*rising*). What a girl it is—all spirits. The worst is that it is so easy to mistake her. (*Crosses* L.)

GEO. (*rising and following her*). And so easy to find out your mistake. But why won't you let me present you with a piano?

EST. I don't want one.

GEO. You said you were fond of playing.

EST. We may be fond of many things without having them. (*Sits at* R. *of table.*) Now here is a gentleman says that he is attached to me. (*Takes letter from pocket.*)

GEO. (*jealous*). May I know his name? (*In front of table at* L.)

EST. What for? It would be as useless as his solicitations. (*Throws letter into fire.*)

GEO. I lit that fire. (*Crosses to fire.*)

EST. Then burn these two—no, not that (*snatching one back*), I must keep that; burn the others.

(GEORGE *does so; crosses again.*)

GEO. Who is that from?

EST. Why do you wish to know?

GEO. Because I love you, and I don't think you love me, and I fear a rival.

EST. You have none!

GEO. I know you have so many admirers.

EST. They're nothing to me.

GEO. None?

EST. No. They're admirers, but there's not a husband among them.

GEO. Not the writer of that letter?

EST. Oh, I like him very much.

GEO. Oh!

EST. And I am very fond of this.

GEO. Then, Esther, you don't care for me!

EST. Don't I? How do you know?

GEO. Because you won't let me read that letter.

EST. It won't please you if you see it.

GEO. I daresay not. That's just the reason that I want to. You won't?

EST. I will—there! (*Gives it to him.*)

GEO. (*reading*). "Dear madam."

EST. That's tender, isn't it?

GEO. "The terms are four pounds. Your dresses to be found for eight weeks certain, and longer if you should suit. (*In astonishment.*) I cannot close the engagement until the return of my partner. I expect him back to-day, and will write you as soon as I have seen him.—Yours very, &c." Four pounds, find dresses! What does this mean?

EST. It means that they want a Columbine for the pantomime at Manchester, and I think I shall get the engagement.

GEO. Manchester? Then you'll leave London.

EST. (*rising*). I must. (*Goes behind table to fireplace; pauses.*) You see this little house is on my shoulders, Polly, only eighteen shillings a week and father has been out of work a long, long time. I make the bread here, and it's hard to make sometimes. I've been mistress of this place, and forced to think ever since my mother died, and I was eight years old.—Four pounds a week is a large sum. I can save out of it.

GEO. (*following and standing at* R. *of and a little behind her*). But you'll go away and I shan't see you.

EST. Perhaps it will be for the best. What future is there for us? You're a man of rank, and I am a poor girl who gets her living by dancing. It would have been better that we had never met.

GEO. No!

EST. Yes, it would, for I'm afraid that ——

GEO. You love me?

EST. I don't know. I'm not sure, but I think I do.

GEO. (*trying to seize her hand*). Esther!

EST. No. Think of the difference of our stations.

GEO. That's what Hawtree says. Caste, caste, curse caste! (*Goes up a little.*)

EST. If I go to Manchester it will be for the best. We must both try to forget each other.

GEO. Forget you. No, Esther, let me —— (*Seizes her hand.*)

POL. (*outside*). Mind what you are about. Oh, dear! oh, dear!

(GEORGE *and* ESTHER *retire up* C. **Enter** POLLY *and* HAWTREE, R. 1 E.)

POL. (*shaking her skirts as she crosses*). You nasty great clumsy corporal, you've spilt the water all over my frock. Oh, dear me! (*Comes down* C.)

HAW. Allow me to offer you a new one.

POL. No (*taking chair* R. *of table*), I won't. You'll be calling to see how it looks when it's on. Haven't you got a handkerchief? Wipe it dry.

(HAWTREE *bends almost on one knee, and wipes dress on her.* **Enter** SAM GERRIDGE, *door* R. 3 E.)

SAM. Afternoon. (*Savagely.*) I suppose you didn't hear me knock. The door was open. I'm afraid I intrude.

POL. No, you don't, we're glad to see you; if you've got a handkerchief help to wipe it dry.

(SAM *passes to* L. *of* POLLY *and assists* HAWTREE.)

HAW. I'm very sorry. (*Rises.*)

POL. It won't spoil it.

SAM. The stain won't come out. (*Rises.*)

POL. It's only water.

SAM. Good-afternoon, Miss Eccles. (POLLY *rises.*) Who's the other swell? (*To* POLLY.)

POL. I'll introduce you. Captain Hawtree—Mr. Sam Gerridge.

HAW. Charmed. (*To* GEORGE, *going up.*) Who's this?

GEO. Polly's sweetheart.

HAW. Oh. (*Puts up eye-glass and stares at* SAM.) Now if I can be of no further assistance, I'll go. (*Looks at watch.*) George, will you? (GEORGE *takes no notice.*) Will you?

GEO. What?

HAW. Go with me.

GEO. Go! No.

HAW. (L. C., *to* POLLY, *coming down*). Then, Miss Eccles—I mean, my lady. (*Shakes hands.*)

POL. (R. C.). Good-bye, Corporal.

HAW. Good-bye. (L.) Good-afternoon, Mr.—pardon me. (*To* SAM.)

SAM (*with constrained rage*). Gerridge, sir.

HAW. Ah, Gerridge. Good-day. (*Goes up.*)

Exit, D. R.

SAM (*to* POLLY). Who's that fool? Who's that long idiot?

POL. I told you—Captain Hawtree.

SAM. What's he want here?

POL. He's a friend of Mr. D'Alroy's.

SAM. Ugh! Isn't one of 'em enough!

POL. What do you mean?

SAM. For the neighbors to talk about. Who's he after?

POL. What do you mean by after? You're forgetting yourself, I think.

SAM. No, I'm not forgetting myself—I'm remembering you. What can a long fool of a swell dressed up to the nines within an inch of his life want after two girls of your class? Look at

the difference of your stations. They don't come here after any good. (*Down* L. C.)

(*During this speech* ESTHER *crosses to fire and sits before it in low chair;* GEORGE *follows her and sits on her* L.)

POL. (*down* R. C.). Samuel!

SAM. I mean what I say. People ought to stick to their own class. Life is a railway journey, and mankind is a passenger—first-class, second-class, third-class. Any person found riding in a superior class to that for which he has taken his ticket will be removed at the first station stopped at, according to the by-laws of the company.

POL. You're giving yourself nice airs. What business is it of yours who comes here? Who are you?

SAM. I'm a mechanic.

POL. That's evident.

SAM. I'm not ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed of my paper cap.

POL. Why should you be? I daresay Captain Hawtree isn't ashamed of his fourteen and sixpenny gossamer.

SAM. You think a lot of him cos' he's a captain. Why did he call you my lady?

POL. Because he treated me as one. I wish you'd make the same mistake.

(*They bounce up stage wrangling.*)

EST. (*sitting with* GEORGE *tête-à-tête by fire*). But we must listen to reason.

GEO. I hate reason.

EST. I wonder what it means?

GEO. Everything disagreeable. When people insist on talking unpleasantly, they always say listen to reason.

SAM (*coming down*). What will the neighbors say?

POL. I don't care. (*Comes down.*)

SAM. What will the neighbors *think?*

POL. They'll *think* nothing. They can't think. Like you, they've not been educated up to it.

SAM. It all comes of your being on the stage.

POL. It all comes of your not understanding me or anything else but putty. Now, if you were a gentleman ——

SAM. Then of course I should make up to a lady.

(*They bounce up stage again.*)

GEO. Reason's an idiot, two and two are four, and twelve and eight are twenty. That's reason.

SAM (*coming down*). The stage! Painting your cheeks.

POL. Better paint our *cheeks* than paint *nasty old doors* as you do. How can you understand art? You, a mechanic. You're not a professional; you're not in trade; you are not of the same station that we are. When the manager speaks to you, you touch your hat, and say, "Yes, sir," because he's your superior.

GEO. When people love there's no such thing as money. It don't exist.

EST. Yes, it does.

GEO. Then it oughtn't to.

SAM. The manager employs me, as he does you. Payment is good everywhere and anywhere; whatever is commercial is right.

POL. Actors are not like mechanics. They wear cloth coats, and not fustian jackets.

SAM. I dislike play-actors.

POL. And I despise mechanics.

(*They tear up stage again.*)

GEO. I never think of anything else but you.

EST. Really!

SAM (*coming down*). Polly, I won't stay here to be insulted. (*Puts on cap.*)

POL. Nobody wants you to stay. Go!

SAM. I will go. Good-bye, Miss Mary Eccles. (*Crosses* C. *to door* R. 3 E.) I shan't come here again. (*Turns to door.*)

POL. Don't! Good riddance to bad rubbish!

SAM. You can go to your *captain.*

POL. And you to your putty. (*Leans against* R. *of table facing him.*)

EST. And so you think you shall always love as you do now?

GEO. More!

POL. (*running quickly across to door* R. 3 E.). Now, you shan't go. (*Locks door, takes out key, which she pockets; places back against door.*) Now I'll just show you my power.

SAM. Miss Eccles, let me out. (*Advances to door.*)

POL. Shan't.

EST. Now you two. (*Postman's knock.*) The postman.

SAM. Now you must let me go; you must unlock the door!

POL. No, I needn't. (*Opens window, looking out.*) Here, postman. (*Takes letter.*) Thank you. (*Reads address.*) Esther.

EST. (*rising*). For me?

POL. Yes. (*Gives it to her, closes window, and returns to door triumphantly. Business of wrangling with* SAM.)

EST. (*going down* L. *of table*). From Manchester.

GEO. Manchester? (*Comes down* L., *back of table.*)

EST. (L. C., *reading*). I've got the engagement, four pounds a week.

(GEORGE *places his arm round her.*)

GEO. You shan't go, Esther. Stay, be my wife.

EST. But the world, your world?

GEO. Damn the world, you're my world. Stay with your husband, Mrs. D'Alroy.

SAM. I *will* go out. (*With sudden determination.*)

POL. You can't and you shan't.

SAM. I can. I will! (*Rushes to window, opens it, and jumps out.*)

WARN curtain.

POL. (*frightened*). He's hurt himself. Sam, dear Sam! (*Runs to window;* SAM'S *face appears at window;* POLLY *shuts it down violently; during this* GEORGE *has kissed* ESTHER.)

GEO. My wife! (*The handle of door is heard to rattle, then the door is shaken violently;* ESTHER *crosses to* POLLY, *up* C., *who gives her key;* ESTHER *then opens the door.* ECCLES reels in *very drunk and clings to the corner of bureau,* R., *for support.* GEORGE *stands* L. C., *pulling his moustache,* ESTHER *a little way up* R. C., *looking with shame first at her father, then at* GEORGE. POLLY *sitting in window recess, up* C.)

RING curtain.

CURTAIN

(*For call,* GEORGE *hat in hand bidding* ESTHER *good-bye,* R., ECCLES *sitting in chair, nods before the fire,* SAM *again looks in at window,* POLLY *pulls the blind violently.*)

ACT II

Scene.—GEORGE'S *lodgings in Mayfair. A handsome room with folding doors at back through which is visible his dining-room with a glimpse of the side-board. There is a window at* R., *and a door at the upper* R. *corner. At* L., *opposite the window, is a piano with a stool before it. There is a table at* R. C., *with a chair and footstool at* L. *of it, and another at its* R., *a little down stage. A chair is placed on either side of the window* R., *and a stand of flowers before it. There is another stand of flowers in the upper* L. *corner, and a large chair below and in front of it.*

LIGHTS full up.

(ESTHER *and* GEORGE *discovered sitting in easy chairs,* R. *and* L. *of table;* GEORGE *has his uniform trousers and spurs on.*)

EST. (R.). George, dear, you seem out of spirits.

GEO. (L., *smoking cigarette*). Not at all, dear; not at all. (*Rallies.*)

EST. Then why don't you talk?

GEO. I've nothing to say.

EST. That's no reason.

GEO. I can't talk about nothing.

EST. Yes, you can. You often do. (*Rises.*) You used to do so before we were married. (*Passes behind his chair, bends over and caresses him.*)

GEO. (*looking up at her and taking the hand she puts on his face, kisses it, drawing her round before him*). No, I didn't. I talked about you and my love for you. D'ye call that nothing?

EST. (*sitting on stool,* L. *of* GEORGE). How long have we been married, dear? Let me see, six months yesterday. (*Dreamily.*) It hardly seems a week. It almost seems a dream.

GEO. Awfully jolly dream. Don't let us wake up. (*Aside.*) How ever shall I tell her?

EST. And when I married you I was twenty-two, wasn't I?

GEO. Yes, dear; but then you know you must have been some age or other.

EST. No; but to think that I'd lived two-and-twenty years without knowing you.

GEO. What of it, dear?

EST. It seems such a dreadful waste of time.

GEO. So it was, awful.

EST. Do you remember our first meeting? Then I was in the ballet.

GEO. Yes. Now you're in the heavies.

EST. Then I was in the front rank. Now I'm of high rank. The Hon. Mrs. George D'Alroy. You promoted me to be your wife.

GEO. No, dear. You promoted me to be your husband.

EST. And now I'm one of the aristocracy, ain't I?

GEO. Yes, dear. I suppose that we may consider ourselves ——

EST. Tell me, George, are you quite sure that you are proud of your poor little humble wife?

GEO. Proud of you! Proud as the winner of the Derby.

EST. Wouldn't you have loved me better if I'd been a lady?

GEO. You are a lady. You're Mrs. D'Alroy.

EST. What will your mamma say when she knows of your marriage? I quite tremble at the thought of meeting her.

GEO. So do I. Luckily she's in Rome.

EST. Do you know, George, I should like to be married all over again.

GEO. Not to anybody else, I hope?

EST. My darling!

GEO. But why over again? Why?

EST. Our courtship was so beautiful! it was like in a novel from the library, only better. You, a fine, rich, high-born gentleman, coming to our humble little house to court poor me. Do you remember the ballet you first saw me in? That was at Covent Garden. "Jeanne la Folle, or, The Return of the Soldier." (*Rises and goes to piano.*) Don't you remember the dance? (*Sits and plays piano.*)

GEO. Esther, how came you to learn to play the piano? Did you teach yourself?

EST. Yes; so did Polly. We can only just touch the notes, to amuse ourselves.

GEO. How was it?

EST. (*turning toward him on piano stool*). I've told you so often!

GEO. Tell me again. (ESTHER *returns to stool at his feet.*) I'm like the children, I like to hear what I know already.

EST. Well then, mother died when I was quite young; I can only just remember her. Polly was an infant, so I had to be Polly's mother. Father, who is a very eccentric man, but a very good one, when you know him (GEORGE'S *jaw drops and he pulls his moustache*), did not take much notice of us, and we got on as well as we could. We used to let the first floor, and a lodger took it—Herr Griffenhaagen. He was a ballet master at the opera. He took a fancy to me, and asked me if I should like to learn to dance, and I told him father couldn't afford to pay for my tuition; and he said that (*imitation*) he didn't want payment, but that he would teach me for nothing; for he had taken a fancy to me, because I was like a little lady he had known long years ago in de far off land he came from. Then he got us an engagement at the theatre. That is how we first were in the ballet.

GEO. That fellow was a great brick; I should like to ask him to dinner! What became of him?

EST. I don't know; he left England. (GEORGE *fidgets and looks at watch; gets up and goes to window at* R.) You are very restless, George; what's the matter?

GEO. Nothing.

EST. Are you going out?

GEO. Yes. (*Looks at his boots and spurs.*) That's the reason I dined in these.

EST. To the barracks? (*Rises.*)

GEO. Yes.

EST. On duty?

(*Both at* C.)

GEO. (*hesitating*). On duty! And of course when a man is a soldier he must go on duty when he's ordered, and when he's ordered, and—and—— (*Aside.*) Why did I ever enter the service?

EST. (*twining her arms round him*). George, if you must go out to your club, go. Don't mind leaving me. (*Takes his hand.*) Somehow or other, George, these last few days everything seems to have changed with me. I don't know why,

sometimes my eyes fill with tears for no reason, and sometimes I feel so happy for no reason. I don't mind being left by myself as I used to do. When you are a few minutes behind time I don't run to the window and watch for you, and turn irritable. Not that I love you less, no! for I love you more; but often when you are away I don't feel that I am by myself. I never feel alone. (*Goes to piano and turns over music.*)

GEO. (*aside*). What angels women are! At least this one is; I forget all about the others. (*Carriage wheels heard off* R.) If I'd known I could have been so happy, I'd have sold out when I married. (*Knock at street door*, R.)

EST. (*standing at table*). That's for us.

GEO. (*at window*, R.). Hawtree in a hansom! (*Aside.*) He's come for me. I must tell her sooner or later. (*At door up* R. C.) Come in, Hawtree.

Enter, *up* R. C., HAWTREE *in regimentals.*

HAW. How do? Hope you're well, Mrs. D'Alroy. (ESTHER *greets him, then turns aside to piano.* HAWTREE *comes down* R.; *places cap on table.*) George, are you coming to——

GEO. (*coming down with him*, C.). No, I've dined. We've dined early.

(ESTHER *plays scraps of music at piano.*)

HAW. (*sotto voce*). Haven't you told her?

GEO. (*going down* L. *of* HAWTREE). No, I daren't.

HAW. But you must.

GEO. You know what an awful coward I am. You do it for me.

HAW. Not for worlds. I have just had my own adieu to make.

GEO. Ah, yes, to Florence Carbury; how did she take it?

HAW. Oh, very well!

GEO. Did she cry?

HAW. No.

GEO. Nor exhibit any emotion whatever?

HAW. No, not particularly.

GEO. Didn't you kiss her?

HAW. No, Lady Clardonax was in the room.

GEO. Didn't she squeeze your hand?

HAW. No.

GEO. Didn't she say anything?

HAW. No, except that she hoped to see me back again soon, and that India was a bad climate.

GEO. Umph! It seems to have been a tragic parting, almost as tragic as parting your back hair.

HAW. Lady Florence is not the sort of person to make a scene.

GEO. To be sure she's not your wife! I wish Esther would be as cool and comfortable. (*After a pause.*) No, I don't. (*A rap at door up* R. C.; *then* **enter** DIXON.) Oh, Dixon, lay out my ——

DIX. (R. C.). I have laid them out; everything is ready. (*Stands up stage near door.*)

GEO. (*after a pause, irresolutely*). I must tell her, mustn't I?

HAW. Better send for her sister. Let Dixon go for her in a cab.

GEO. Just so. I'll send him at once. Dixon —— (*Goes up and talks to* DIXON.)

EST. (*rising*). Do you want to have a talk with my husband? Shall I go into the dining-room?

HAW. No, Mrs. D'Alroy. (*Goes to her at piano.*)

GEO. No, dear. At once, Dixon. Tell the cabman to drive like—(**exit** DIXON) like a cornet just joined. (*Goes down* R. C.)

EST. (*to* HAWTREE). Are you going to take him anywhere?

HAW. No. (*Aside.*) Yes, to India. (*Crosses* C., *to* GEORGE.) Tell her now.

GEO. No, no. I'll wait till I put on my uniform. (*Goes up* R.; *the door up* R. C. *opens and* POLLY *peeps in.*)

POL. How d'ye do, good people? quite well?

GEO. Eh! Didn't you meet Dixon?

POL. Who?

GEO. Dixon—my man.

POL. No. (**Enters.**)

GEO. (*crossing down* L. *to* ESTHER; *aside*). Confound it! He'll have his ride for nothing.

POL. Bless you, my turtles. (*Blesses them ballet fashion.*) George, kiss your mother. (*He kisses her.*) That's what I call an honorable brother-in-law's kiss. I'm not in the way, am I?

GEO. (*crossing to* HAW.). Not at all. I'm very glad you've come.

(ESTHER *and* POLLY *embrace.* POLLY *sits on piano stool from which* ESTHER *has risen and takes off her hat, placing parasol top of piano.*)

HAW. (*back to audience and elbow on easy chair,* R.; *aside to* GEORGE). Under ordinary circumstances she's not a very eligible visitor.

GEO. Caste again. (*Goes up* C.) I'll be back directly.

Exit *through folding doors,* C.

HAW. (*crossing* L.). Mrs. D'Alroy, I —— (*Shakes hands.*)

EST. (*who is standing over* POLLY, *at piano*). Going?

POL. (*rising*). I drive you away, Captain? (*Takes her parasol from piano.*)

HAW. No.

POL. Yes, I do, I frighten you. I'm so ugly; I know I do. You frighten me.

HAW. How so?

POL. You're so handsome. (*Comes down* L. C.) Particularly in these clothes, for all the world like an inspector of police.

EST. (*half-aside*). Polly!

HAW. (*aside*). This is a wild sort of thing in sisters-in-law. (*Up stage,* C.)

POL. Any news, Captain?

HAW. (*in a drawling tone*). No. Is there any news with you?

POL. (*imitating his drawl*). Yes. We've got a new piece coming out at our theatre.

HAW. What's it about?

POL. (*drawling*). I don't know. (*To* ESTHER.) Had him there. (HAW. *drops sword impatiently.*) Going to kill anybody to-day that you've got your sword on?

HAW. No.

POL. I thought not. (*Sings.*)

> "With a sabre on his brow,
> And a helmet by his side;
> The soldier sweethearts servant maids,
> And eats cold meat besides." (*Laughs.*)

Enter GEORGE, *door up stage,* C., *in uniform, carrying in his hand his sword, sword belt and cap.* ESTHER *meets him,*

takes them from him, and places them on chair up L., *then comes half down* L. ; GEORGE *goes down* R. C.

POL. (*clapping her hands*). Oh, here's a beautiful brother-in-law ! Why didn't you come in on your horse as they do at Astley's? Gallop in and say (*puts parasol under her arm and imitates prances of a horse all through following scene ; canters down* C.): Soldiers of France, the eyes of Europe are a-looking at you. The Empire has confidence in you, and France expects that every man this day will do his little utmost. The foe is before you—more's the pity—and you are before them—worse luck for you ! Forward ! Go and get killed, and to those who escape, the Emperor will give a little bit of ribbon. Nineteens about ! Forward ! Gallop ! Charge ! (*Round to* R., *imitating bugle and giving point with parasol ; she nearly spears* HAWTREE'S *nose.* HAWTREE *claps his hand upon his sword-hilt ; she throws herself into chair laughing, and clapping* HAWTREE'S *cap from table upon her head. All laugh and applaud—carriage wheels heard without.*) What's that? (*A peal of knocks heard at street door.*)

GEORGE (*who has hastened to window, up* R.). A carriage. Good heavens, my mother !

HAW. (*at window,* R.). The marchioness !

EST. (*crossing to* GEORGE). Oh, George !

POL. (*crossing to window*). A marchioness ! A real live marchioness ! Let me look ! I never saw a ——

GEO. (*forcing her from window*). No, no, no ! She doesn't know I'm married. I must break it to her by degrees. What shall I do?

EST. Let me go into the bedroom until ——

HAW. Too late. She's on the stairs.

EST. Here, then. (*Goes to doors,* C., *up stage.*)

POL. I want to see a real live march ——

(GEORGE *lifts her in his arms and places her within folding doors with* ESTHER, *crossing to door* R. C. ; HAWTREE *closes folding doors,* C., *as* GEORGE *opens door* R. C., *and* admits MARQUISE DE ST. MAUR.)

GEO. (*escorting her down stage,* R.). My dear mother, I saw you getting out of the carriage.

(HAWTREE, *up* L.)

MAR. My dear boy (*kissing his forehead*), I am so glad I

got to London before you embarked. (GEORGE *nervous;* HAWTREE *comes down* L.) Captain Hawtree, I think. How do you do?

HAW. (*crossing in front of table*). Quite well, I thank your ladyship. I trust you are?

MAR. (*sitting in easy chair,* R.). Oh, quite, thanks. Do you still see the Countess and Lady Florence?

HAW. Yes.

MAR. Please remember me to them. (HAWTREE *takes cap from table and places sword under his arm.*) Are you going?

HAW. Yaas. I am compelled. (*Bows, crosses round back of table; to* GEORGE, *who meets him,* R. C.) I'll be at the door for you at seven. We must be at barracks by the quarter. (GEORGE *crosses back,* L.) Poor devil! This comes of a man marrying beneath him.

Exit *door* R.; GEORGE *comes down* L. *of table.*

MAR. I'm not sorry that he's gone, for I wanted to talk to you alone. Strange that a woman of such good birth as the Countess should encourage the attentions of Captain Hawtree for her daughter Florence. Lady Clardonax was one of the old Carburys of Hampshire—not the Norfolk Carburys but the direct line, and Mr. Hawtree's grandfather was in trade—something in the City—soap, I think, perhaps pickles. (*Points to stool;* GEORGE *brings it to her; she motions that he is to sit at her feet;* GEORGE *does so.*) He's a very nice person, but parvenu as any one may see by his languor and his swagger. My boy (*kissing his forehead*), I am sure, will never make a mésalliance. He is a D'Alroy and by his mother's side, Planta Genista. The source of our life stream is Royal!

GEO. How is the Marquis?

MAR. Paralyzed. I left him at Spa with three physicians. He always is paralyzed at this time of the year; it's in the family. The paralysis is not personal but hereditary. I came over to see my steward; got to town last night.

GEO. How did you find me out here?

MAR. I sent the footman to the barracks, and he saw your man Dixon in the street, and Dixon gave him this address. It's so long since I've seen you. (*Leans back in chair.*) You're looking very well, and I dare say when mounted are quite a beau cavalier; and so, my boy (*playing with his hair*), you are going abroad for the first time on active service?

GEO. (*aside*). Every word can be heard in the next room—if they have only gone up-stairs!

MAR. And now, my dear boy, before you go I want to give you some advice, and you mustn't despise it because I'm an old woman. We old women know a great deal more than people give us credit for. You are a soldier, so was your father, so was his father, so was mine, so was our Royal founder. We were born to lead—the common people expect it from us. It is our duty. Do you not remember in the chronicles of Froissart—(*with great enjoyment*)—I think I can quote it word for word. I've a wonderful memory for my age. (*With closed eyes.*) It was in the 59th chapter how Godefroy D'Alroy helde the towne of St. Amande during the siege before Tournay. It said the towne was not closed but with pales, and captayne there was Sir Amory of Pauy, the Seneschall of Carcassonne, who had said it was not able to holde agaynste an hooste, when one Godefroy D'Alroy say'd that rather than he woulde depart, he woulde keep it to the best of his power. Whereat the soldiers cheered and say'd "Lead us on, Sir Godefroy," and then began a fierce assault, and they within were chased, and sought for shelter from streete to streete, but Godefroy stayed at the gate so valyantly, that the soldiers helde the towne until the commynge of the Earl of Haynault with twelve thousand men.

GEO. I wish she'd go. If she once gets on to Froissart she'll never know when to stop. (*Aside.*)

MAR. When my boy fights, and you will fight over there, he is sure to distinguish himself; it is his nature to. (*Toys with his hair.*) He cannot forget his birth, and when you meet these Asiatic ruffians who have dared to revolt and to outrage humanity, you will strike as your ancestor Galtier of Chevrault struck at Poictiers. Froissart mentions it thus: "Sir Galtier with his four squires was in the front of that battell, and there did marvels in arms, and Sir Galtier rode up to the Prince and said to him, 'Sir, take your horse and ride forth, this journey is yours; God is this day in your hands. Gette us to the French Kynge's batayle. I think verily by his valyantesse he woll not fly. Advance banner in the name of God and of Saynt George,' and Galtier gallopped forward to see his Kynge's victory and meet his own death."

GEO. If Esther hears all this! (*Aside.*)

MAR. There is another subject about which I should have spoken to you before this, but an absurd prudery forbade me. I may never see you more. I am old, and you are going into

battle (*kissing his forehead with emotion*), and this may be our last meeting. (*Exclamation is heard outside folding doors.*) What's that?

GEO. Nothing. My man—Dixon—in there.

MAR. We may not meet again on this earth. I do not fear your conduct, my George, with men, but I know the temptations that beset a youth who is well born; but a true soldier, a true gentleman, should not only be without fear but without reproach. It is easier to fight a famous man than to forego the conquest of a love-sick girl. A thousand Sepoys slain in battle cannot redeem the honor of a man who has betrayed the confidence of a confiding woman. Think, George, what a dishonor, what a stain upon your manhood, to hurl a girl to shame and degradation, and what excuse for it? That she is plebeian! A man of real honor will spare the woman who has confessed her love for him, as he would give quarter to an enemy he had disarmed. (*Takes his hand.*) Let my boy avoid the snares so artfully spread, and when he asks his mother to welcome the woman he has chosen for his wife, let me take her to my arms and plant a motherly kiss upon the white brow of a lady. (*Noise of a fall heard outside folding doors.* MAR. *rises.*) What's that?

GEO. Nothing! (*Rises.*)

MAR. I heard a cry. (*Goes up stage and throws open folding doors, discovering* ESTHER *lying on floor, with* POLLY *kneeling over her.*)

POL. George! George!

(GEORGE *goes up and raises* ESTHER *in his arms;* POLLY *goes down* L. *and wheels easy chair up* L. *for her;* GEORGE *places* ESTHER *in chair,* GEORGE *on her* R., POLLY *on her* L.)

MAR. (*coming down,* R.). Who are these *women?*

POL. Women!

MAR. George D'Alroy, these persons should have been sent away. How could you dare to risk your mother meeting women of their stamp?

POL. (*back,* L. C., *violently*). What does she mean? How dare she call us women? What's she, I'd like to know?

GEO. Silence, Polly. You mustn't insult my mother.

MAR. The insult is from you. I leave you, and I hope that time may induce me to forget this scene of degradation. (*Goes up* R.)

GEO. Stay, mother. (MARQUISE *goes down a little*, R.) Before you go let me present to you Mrs. George D'Alroy, my wife.

(GEORGE *has raised* ESTHER *from chair in both arms and supports her to up* C.)

MAR. Married!

GEO. Married.

(*The* MARQUISE *sinks into easy chair*, R. GEORGE *replaces* ESTHER *in easy chair up* L., *but still retains her hand. Two hesitating taps heard at door* R. C. ECCLES **enters** *sneakingly.*)

ECC. They told us to come up-stairs. When your man came, Polly was out, so I thought I should do instead. (*Calls at door.*) Come up, Sam.

Enter SAM *in his Sunday clothes and smoking a cheroot; he nods and grins.*

ECC. Sam had just called, so we three, Sam and I, and your man, all came in a hansom cab together. Didn't we, Sam?

(ECCLES *and* SAM *go over to the girls*, L.)

MAR. (*with glasses up, to* GEORGE). Who is this?

GEO. (*coming down* L. *of* MARQUISE). My wife's father.

(ECCLES *comes down smilingly*, L.)

MAR. What is he?

GEO. A—nothing.

ECC. I am one of Nature's noblemen. Happy to see you, my lady. (*Crosses to her.*) Now my daughter's told me who you are, (GEORGE *turns his back in an agony*) we old folks, father and mother of the young couple, ought to make friends. (*Holds out his dirty hand.*)

MAR. (*shrinking back*). Go away. What's his name?

(ECCLES *goes up again disgusted*, L.)

GEO. Eccles.

MAR. Eccles! Eccles! There never was an Eccles. He don't exist.

ECC. (*coming down*, L.). Don't he? What d'ye call this? (*Goes up again*, L., *and speaks to* SAM.)

MAR. No Eccles was ever born.
GEO. He takes the liberty of breathing, notwithstanding.
(*Aside.*) And I wish he wouldn't.
MAR. And who is the *little man?* Is he also Eccles?

(SAM *looks round;* POLLY *gets close up to him, and looks with defiant glance at the* MARQUISE.)

GEO. No.
MAR. Thank goodness! What, then?
GEO. His name is Gerridge.
MAR. Gerridge! It breaks one's teeth. Why is he here?
GEO. He is making love to Polly, my wife's sister.
MAR. And what is he?
GEO. A gasman.
MAR. He looks it! (GEORGE *goes up to* ESTHER, L.) And what is the—the sister?

(ECCLES, *who has been casting longing eyes at the decanter on table, edges toward it and when he thinks no one is noticing, fills wine glass.*)

POL. (*asserting herself indignantly*). I'm in the ballet at the Theatre Royal, Lambeth—so was Esther. We're not ashamed of what we are. We have no cause to be.
SAM (*back*, L. C.). That's right, Polly, pitch into the swells. Who are they? (*Goes up a little.*)

(ECCLES *by this time has seized wine glass and turning his back is about to drink, when* HAWTREE **enters** *door*, R. C.; ECCLES *hides glass under his coat, and pretends to be looking up at picture.*)

HAW. (**entering**). George! (*Stops suddenly, looking round.*) So all's known.
MAR. (*rising*). Captain Hawtree, see me to my carriage. (HAWTREE *comes down.*) I am broken-hearted. (*Takes* HAWTREE'S *arm, crosses, is going up.*)

(ECCLES, *who simultaneously has tasted the claret, spits it out again with a grimace, exclaiming, "Rot."* ESTHER *rises from chair in nervous excitement, clutching* GEORGE'S *hand.*)

GEO. (*to* MARQUISE). Don't go in anger. You may not see me again.

(MARQUISE *stops*, R.; ESTHER *brings* GEORGE *down* C.

EST. (L. C., *with arm round his neck*). Oh! George, must you go?

GEO. Yes.

EST. I can't leave you—I'll go with you.

GEO. Impossible, the country is too unsettled.

EST. May I come after you?

GEO. Yes.

EST. (*with her head on his shoulder*). I may!

MAR. (*coming down*, R.). It is his duty to go—his honor calls him. The honor of his family—*our* honor!

EST. But I love him so. Pray don't be angry with me.

HAW. (*looking at watch and coming down* C.). George!

GEO. I must go, love.

(HAWTREE *goes up* R. C.)

MAR. (*advancing*). Let me arm you, George—let your mother, as in the days of old. There is blood and blood, my son, let Radicals and rebels rave as they will—see, your wife cries, when she should be proud of you.

WARN curtain.

GEO. My Esther is all that is true, good, and noble. No lady born to a coronet could be gentler or more true. Esther, my wife, fetch me my sword, and buckle my belt round me. (*Whispers to* ESTHER.) It will please my mother. (*To* MARQUISE *at* R.) You shall see. (ESTHER *totters up stage*, L., *and brings down his sword*, POLLY *his cap; as* ESTHER *is trying to buckle his belt he whispers.*) I've left money for you, my darling. My lawyer will call on you to-morrow. Forgive me; I tried to tell you we were ordered for India, but when the time came my heart failed me and I ——

RING curtain.

(ESTHER, *before she can succeed in fastening his sword belt, reels and falls fainting in his arms.* POLLY *hurries to her*, L., *and takes her hand.* SAM *stands at piano looking frightened;* ECCLES *at back very little concerned;* HAWTREE

with hand upon handle of door, R. F., *and* MARQUISE *looking on* R. *of* GEORGE.)

CURTAIN

(*For call,* ESTHER *in chair fainting*—POLLY *and* SAM *each side of her holding her hands—the folding doors,* L. C., *thrown open and* ECCLES *standing within holding up bottle of brandy to the light, with triumphant grin on his face.*)

ACT III

Scene.—*The room in Stangate, as in Act I. Piano in place of bureau at* L. *Map of India, sword knot and sword, cap and spurs hanging over mantel. Bandbox on table,* L. C., *with ballet dress in it. Slate and pencil beside it. Cradle up stage,* L. C.

(POLLY *discovered, dressed in black, seated at table,* R. *corner of it—she is placing the skirt in bandbox as curtain rises.*)

LIGHTS full up.

POL. (*singing as curtain rises*).

"And she watched his department with anguish,
While the tears down in torrents did roll."

(*Places skirt in box and leans her chin upon her hand*). There, there's the dress for poor Esther in case she gets the engagement, which I don't suppose she will; it's too good luck, and good luck never comes to her, poor thing. (*Rises and goes up to cradle, up* C.) Baby's asleep still. How good he looks, as good as if he were dead, like his poor father, and alive too at the same time, like his dear self. Oh, dear me, it's a strange world. (*Sits again as before, feeling in pocket for money.*) Four and elevenpence; that must do for to-day and to-morrow. Esther's going to bring in the rusks for Georgie. (*Takes up slate.*) Three, five, eight and four, twelve, one shilling. Um, father can only have twopence; he must make do with that till Saturday, when I get my salary. If Esther gets the engagement I shan't have any more salaries to take. I

shall leave the stage and retire into private life. I wonder if I shall like private life, and if private life will like me. It will seem so strange being no longer Miss Mary Eccles—Mary Eccles—but Mrs. Samuel Gerridge. (*Writes it on slate.*) Mrs. Samuel Gerridge. (*Laughs bashfully.*) La! To think of my being Mrs. Anybody. How annoyed Susan Smith will be. (*Writes on slate.*) Mrs. Samuel Gerridge presents her compliments to Miss Susan Smith, and Mrs. Samuel Gerridge requests the favor of Miss Susan Smith's company to tea on Tuesday evening next, at Mrs. Samuel Gerridge's house. (*Pause.*) Poor Susan! (*Begins again.*) P. S., Mrs. Samuel Gerridge —— (*Knock heard at room door up* R. POLLY *starts.*)

SAM (*outside*). Polly, open the door.

POL. Sam! (*Wipes out note on slate.*) Come in.

SAM (*without*). I can't.

POL. Why not?

SAM. I've got something on my head.

(POLLY *rises and opens door* R. SAM enters, *carrying a small table on his head; he has a rule pocket in corduroys; rule seen.*)

POL. (*coming down* C.). What's that? (*Shuts door.*)

SAM. Furniture. (*Goes down* R., *and deposits table.*) How are you, my Polly? (*Kisses her.*) Bless you, you look handsomer than ever this morning. (*Dances and sings.*)

Fiddle-ti-tum de di do
Fiddle-ti-dum de day
Fiddle-ti-tum de di do
Toddle-rum-a day.

POL. (L.). What's the matter, Sam, are you mad? (*Sits.*)

SAM. No, happy; much the same thing.

POL. Where have you been these two days?

SAM. That's just what I'm going to tell you. Polly, my pet, my brightest batswing and most brilliant burner, what do you think? (*Crosses* L., *and leans over to kiss her.*)

POL. (*pushing him away*). Oh, do go on, Sam, or I'll slap your face.

SAM (R.). Well, you've heard me speak of old Binks the plumber, and glazier, and gasfitter, who died six months ago?

POL. Yes.

SAM. I've bought his business. (*Sits on table.*)

POL. No!

SAM. Yes, of his widow, Mrs. Binks. So much down, so much more at the end of the year. (*Imitates dancing with his feet dangling as he sits on table*, R. *Sings.*) Ri ti toodle, roodle oodle. Ri ti tooral ororal lay.

POL. La, Sam!

SAM (*gesticulating*). Yes, I've bought the good-will, fixtures, fittings, stock, rolls of gas pipe, and sheets of lead. (*Swings round on table to face* POLLY.) I am a tradesman with a shop, a master tradesman. (POLLY *rises and crosses to table with slate under her arm—leans against front of table.* SAM *swings round beside her and puts his arm round her.*) All I want to complete the premises is a missus. (*Tries to kiss her; she slaps his face.*)

POL. Sam, don't be foolish!

SAM. Come and be Mrs. Sam Gerridge, Polly, my patent safety day and night light. You'll furnish me completely.

(POLLY *looks slyly at slate.* SAM *snatches it up and looks at it; she snatches it from him with a shriek and rubs out writing as he chases up stage—catches her up* C., *kisses her, comes down* R. C. *with her.*)

POL. (R. C.). Only to think!

SAM. I spent all yesterday looking up furniture. I bought that at a bargain. (*Opens drawer of table*, R.) And I brought it to show you for your approval. I've bought lots of other things, and I'll bring 'em all here to show you for your approval.

POL. I couldn't think what had become of you.

SAM. Look here. (*Produces patterns of paper.*) I want you to choose the pattern for the back parlor behind the shop. I'll new paper it and new paint it, and new furnish it. It shall be all bran new.

POL. (L. *of table*). But won't it cost a lot of money, Sam?

SAM. I can work for it. With customers in the shop, and you in the back parlor, I can work like fifty men. (*Sits on table*, R. C., *with arm round* POLLY.) Only fancy at night when the shop's closed and the shutters are up, counting out the till together. Besides, that isn't all I've done; I've been writing, and what I've written I've got printed.

POL. No!

SAM. True.

POL. You've been writing about me. (*Delighted.*)

SAM. No, about the shop. (POLLY *disgusted.*) Here it is. (*Takes roll of circulars from pocket.*) You mustn't laugh; you know it's my first attempt. I wrote it the night before last, and when I thought of you, Polly, the words seemed to flow like red hot solder. (*Reads.*) "Sam Gerridge takes this opportunity of informing the nobility, gentry, and inhabitants of the Borough Road"—you know there's not many of the nobility and gentry live in the Borough Road; but it pleases the inhabitants to make 'em believe you think so—"of informing the nobility, gentry, and inhabitants of the Borough Road, and its vicinity"—that's rather good, I think? (*Looks at her.*)

POL. Yes; I've heard worse.

SAM. I first thought of saying neighborhood, but I thought vicinity sounded more genteel. "And its vicinity, that he has entered upon the business of the late Mr. Binks, his relict, the present Mrs. B., having disposed to him of the same." Now listen, Polly, because it gets interesting—"S. G.——"

POL. S. G. Who's he?

SAM. Me, S. G., Samuel Gerridge, me—us—we're S. G. Don't interrupt me or you'll cool my metal and then I can't work. "S. G. hopes by a constant attention to business and"—mark this—"by supplying the best articles at the most reasonable prices, to merit a continuance of those favors which it will ever be his constant study to deserve." There! (*Turns on table to* R., *triumphantly.*) Stop a bit—there's more yet—"bell-hanging, gas-fitting, plumbing and glazing as usual." There—it's all my own. (*Puts circular on mantelpiece, crosses* R., *then stands back to contemplate it, his arm still round* POLLY'S *waist.*) And now, Polly, I'll go—I shall go and send some—— (*Takes his table up* R.; *postman's knock.*) If there ain't the postman! (*Goes off* R. D.—*leaves table—and returns with letter.*)

POL. (C., *taking it*). Oh! for Esther. I know who it's from. (*Places letter on mantelpiece,* L.; *seriously.*) Sam, who do you think was here last night?

SAM. Who?

POL. Captain Hawtree. (*Comes across,* L. C.)

SAM. (*depreciatingly*). Oh, come back from India, I suppose?

POL. Yes; luckily Esther was out. (*Sits* L. *of table.*)

SAM. I never liked that long swell. He was an uppish, conceited——

POL. Oh, he's better than he used to be. He's a major now. He's only been in England a fortnight.

SAM (L.). Did he tell you anything about poor D'Alroy?

POL. (*leaning on table*). Yes; he said he was riding out not far from the cantonment, and was surrounded by a troop of Sepoy cavalry, which took him prisoner and galloped off with him.

SAM. But about his death?

POL. Oh! (*Hides her face.*) Oh! that, he said, was believed to be too terrible to mention.

SAM. Did he tell you anything else?

POL. No; he asked a lot of questions, and I told him everything. How poor Esther had taken her widowhood, and what a dear good baby the baby was, and what a comfort to us all, and how Esther had come back to live with us again.

SAM. And the reason for it?

POL. (*nodding her head sadly*). Yes.

SAM. How your father got the money that was left for Esther?

POL. Don't say any more about that, Sam.

SAM. I only think Captain Hawtree ought to know where the money did go, and that you shouldn't screen your father and let him suppose that you and Esther spent it all.

POL. I told him.

SAM. Did you tell him that your father was always at harmonic meetings, at taverns, and had half-cracked himself by drink, and was always singing the songs and making the speeches that he heard there, and that he was always going on about his wrongs as one of the working classes? He's a pretty one for one of the working classes—he is! Hasn't done a stroke of work these twenty years. Now, I am one of the working classes, but I don't howl about it. I only work and I don't spout. (*Goes up* C., *and comes down again.*)

POL. Hold your tongue, Sam. I won't have you say any more against poor father. He has his faults, but he's a very clever man.

SAM (*sighing*). Oh! What else did Captain Hawtree say?

POL. He advised us to apply to Mr. D'Alroy's mother.

SAM. The Marquissy? And what did you say?

POL. I said that Esther wouldn't hear of it, and so the Major said that he'd write to Esther, and I suppose this is the letter.

SAM. Now, Polly, come and choose the paper. (*Goes up* C.)

POL. (*rising*). Can't; who's to mind baby? (*Up stage to cradle.*)

SAM (*at window*). There's your father passing; won't he mind him?

POL. (*at window with* SAM). I daresay he will. If I promise him an extra sixpence on Saturday. (*Taps at window.*) Hi! Father!

SAM (*aside*). He looks down in the mouth. I suppose he's had no drink. (*Goes down* R.)

Enter ECCLES *in shabby black; taking half circle of stage, he sits before fire,* L.

POL. Come in to stop a bit, father? (*Down* C.)

ECC. No, not for long. Good-morning, Samuel. Going back to work—that's right, my boy. Stick to it! (*Pokes fire.*) Stick to it! Nothing like it!

SAM (*down* R. C.; *aside*). Now isn't that too bad? (*Aloud.*) No, Mr. Eccles, I've knocked off for the day.

ECC. (*waving poker*). That's bad—that's bad. Nothing like work for the young. I don't work so much as I used to myself; but I like to see the young uns at it. It does me good, and it does them good too. What does the poet say? (*Gesticulates with poker.*)

> "A carpenter said, tho' that was well spoke,
> It was better by far to defend it with oak;
> A currier, wiser than both put together,
> Said, say what you will there is nothing like labor.
> For a' that, an' a' that,
> Your ribbon, gown, and a' that;
> The rank is but the guinea stamp,
> The working man's the gold for a' that."

(*Triumphantly wags his head.* POLLY *crosses to him to quiet him.*)

SAM (*aside*). This is the sort of public-house loafer that wants the wages and no work, an idle old —— (*Goes up in disgust.*)

POL. (*on* ECCLES' L.). Esther will be in by and by. Do, father.

ECC. No, no, I tell you I won't.

POL. (*whispering; arm around his neck*). And I'll give you sixpence extra on Saturday.

Ecc. Oh! Very well. (POLLY *gets hat and cloak from peg up* R.) Oh, you puss, you know how to get over your poor old father.

SAM (*aside*). Yes; with sixpence.

POL. (*putting on bonnet;* ECCLES *looks at clock*). Give the cradle a rock if baby cries, father.

Ecc. Twenty minutes!

SAM. If you should want employment or amusement, Mr. Eccles, cast your eye over that. (*Gives him circular and* exit *with* POLLY, R.; ECCLES *lights pipe and stands with back to fire, smoking vigorously; a pause.*)

Ecc. Poor Esther! nice market she's brought her pigs to. Ugh! Mind the baby indeed; what good is he to me? That fool of a girl to throw away all her chances—*a honorableless*—and her father not to have on him the price of a pint of early beer or a quartern of cool refreshing gin; stopping in here to rock a young honorable. (*Up to cradle and looks in.*) Cuss him! (*Rocks cradle.*) Are we slaves, we working men? (*Sings savagely.*) Britons never, never, never shall be —— (*Dashes pipe into fireplace, and going down, sits at end of table,* L. *of it; nods his head sagaciously; hands in his trousers pockets.*) However, I won't stand this much longer; I've writ to the old cat, I mean to the Marquissy, to tell her that her daughter-in-law and her grandson is almost starving. That fool Esther, too proud to write to her for money. I hate pride, it's beastly! (*Rises.*) There's no beastly pride about me. (*Goes up* R. *of table, smacking his lips.*) I'm as dry as a lime kiln. (*Crosses to mantelpiece and takes up dram bottle.*) Empty. (*Replaces it; takes up jug from table.*) Milk. (*With disgust.*) For this young aristocratic pauper; everybody in the house is sacrificed for him. (*At foot of cradle,* R. C., *with hands on chair back.*) And to think that a working man, and a member of the Committee of the Banded Brothers for the regeneration of human kind by means of equal diffusion of intelligence and equal division of property should be thirsty while this cub —— (*Looks at child—after a pause.*) That there coral he's got round his neck is *gold*, real *gold*. Oh! society! Oh! Government! Oh! Class Legislature—*is this right?* Shall this mindless wretch enjoy himself while sleeping with a jewelled gaud, and his poor old grandfather wants the price of half-pint? *No*, it shall not be. Rather than see it I will myself resent this outrage on the rights of man, and in this holy crusade of class

against class, of weak and lowly against the powerful and the strong (*pointing to child*), I will strike one blow for freedom. (*Goes behind cradle and leans over it.*) He's asleep. It will fetch ten bob round the corner, and if the Marquissy gives us anything it can be got out with some o' that. (*Steals coral.*) Lie still, my darling. (*Rocks the cradle.*) It's grandfather's a-watching you! (*Puts coral in his pocket.*)

> "Who ran to catch me when I fell,
> And kicked the place to make it well —
> My grandfather."

(*Steals toward door. As he is going off* R. 3 E., enter ESTHER *at that door; she is dressed like a widow, pale face, and her manner quick, stern and imperious; she carries a parcel and paper bag of rusks in her hand.*)

ECC. (*starting back confused*). My love!

(ESTHER *passes him, puts parcel on table, goes to cradle, kneels down and kisses child.* ECCLES *fumbles with the lock nervously, and is going out as* ESTHER *speaks.*)

EST. My Georgie! Where's his coral? Gone! Father, —(*rising;* ECCLES *stopping*) the coral! Where is it?

ECC. (*confused*). Where's what?

EST. The coral! You've got it; I know it. Give it me. (*Quickly and imperiously.*) Give it me—*give it me.* (ECCLES *takes coral from his pocket and gives it back.*) If you *dare* to touch *my* child! (*Goes to cradle.*)

ECC. Esther, am I not your father? (*Comes down* R. ESTHER *gets round table to* L. C.)

EST. And I am his mother.

ECC. Do you bandy words with me, you pauper, to whom I have given shelter, shelter to you and your brat? I've a good mind —— (*Advances to her with clenched fist.*)

EST. (*confronting him*). If you dare! I am no longer your little drudge, your frightened servant. When mother died and I was so high, I tended you, and worked for you, and you beat me. That time is past. I am a woman, I am a wife, a widow, a mother. Do you think I will let you outrage *him?* (*Points to cradle.*) Touch me if you dare! (*Advances a step.*)

ECC. (*bursting into tears*). And this is my own child which I nursed when a baby, and sung cootchicum cootchie to afore

she could speak. Honorable Mrs. D'Alroy, I forgive you for all that you have said. In everything that I have done I've acted with the best intentions. May the babe in that cradle never treat you as you have tret me—a grey 'air'd father. May he never cease to love and *h*onor you as you have ceased to love and *h*onor me, after all that I've done for you, and the position to which I've raised you by my own industry. May he never behave to you like the bad daughters of King Lear; and may you never live to feel how sharper than a serpent's scales it is to have a toothless child.

Exit *solemnly*, R. 3 E.

EST. (*kneeling by cradle*). My darling! (*Arranges bed and places coral to the baby's lips and then to her own.*) Mamma's come back to her own. Did she stay away from him so long? (*Rises and looks at the sabre, etc.*) My George, to think you never can look upon his face, nor hear his voice! My brave gallant, and handsome husband! My lion and my love! (*Comes down* C., *pacing the stage.*) Oh! to be a soldier, and to fight the wretches who destroyed him, who took my darling from me! To gallop miles upon their upturned faces! (*Crosses* L., *with action; sees letter.*) What's this! Captain Hawtree's hand. (*Reads.*) "My dear Mrs. D'Alroy, I returned to England less than a fortnight ago. I have some papers and effects of my poor friend's, which I am anxious to deliver to you, and I beg of you to name a day when I can call with them and see you. At the same time let me express my deepest sympathy with your affliction. Your husband's loss was mourned by every man in the regiment. (ESTHER *overcome for a moment, wipes her eyes and goes on.*) I have heard with great pain of the pecuniary embarrassments into which accident and the imprudence of others have placed you. I trust you will not consider me, one of poor George's oldest comrades and friends, either intrusive or impertinent in sending the enclosed—(*she takes out check*)—and in hoping that should any further difficulties arise you will inform me of them, and remember that I am, dear Mrs. D'Alroy, now and always, your faithful and sincere friend, Arthur Hawtree." (ESTHER *goes to cradle and bends over it.*) Oh, his boy, if you could read it!

Enter POLLY, R. 3 E.

POL. (*crossing to* ESTHER *and kissing her affectionately*). Father gone?

EST. Polly, you look quite flurried. (POLLY *laughs and whispers to* ESTHER. *They come down* C. *together.* ESTHER *near head of table takes* POLLY *in her arms and kisses her.*) So soon! Well, my darling, I hope you may be happy. (*Sobs.*)

POL. (*crossing* L. *round table and putting rusks in saucepan*). Sam is going to speak to father to-day. Did you see the agent, dear?

EST. (R. *of table*). Yes; the manager didn't come, he broke his appointment again.

POL. (L. *of table*). Nasty rude fellow!

EST. (*seated*). The agent said it didn't matter. He thought I should get the engagement; he'll only give me thirty shillings a week though.

POL. But you said that two pounds was the regular salary.

EST. (*handkerchief to eyes*). Yes, but they know I'm poor, and want the engagement, and so take advantage of me. (*With her handkerchief to her eyes.*)

POL. I put the dress in the bandbox; it looks almost as good as new.

EST. (*taking dress from box and examining it*). I've had a letter from Captain Hawtree.

POL. I know, dear, he came here last night.

EST. A dear, good letter, speaking of George, and enclosing me a check for thirty pounds.

POL. (*up at cupboard*). Oh, how kind! You mustn't let father know of it. (*Comes down to table; noise of carriage wheels without.*)

EST. I shan't.

Enter ECCLES, *breathless;* ESTHER *rises;* POLLY *runs to window.*

ECC. (*down* C.). It's the Marquissy in her coach. Now be civil to her, and she may do something for us; I see the coach as I was coming from the Rainbow. (*At door.*) This way, my lady; up them steps; they're rather awkward for anybody like you, but them as is poor and lowly must do as best they can with steps and circumstances. (*Bows obsequiously as he backs from the door.*)

(ESTHER *and* POLLY L. *at end of table*—enter MARQUISE, R. 2 E., *carrying baby's hood and cloak. She surveys the place contemptuously.* ESTHER *drops the costume into bandbox and* POLLY *puts the lid on it.*)

MAR. (*half aside, going down* R.). What a hole! and for my grandson to breathe such an atmosphere, and to be contaminated by such associations. (*To* ECCLES, *who is a little up* R. C.) Which is the young woman who married my son?

EST. (*coldly*). I am Mrs. D'Alroy, widow of George D'Alroy. Who are you?

MAR. I am his mother, the Marquise de St. Maur.

EST. (*with a grand air*). Be seated, I beg.

MAR. (*rejecting chair offered servilely by* ECCLES, *and looking round*). The chairs are all dirty.

Enter SAM, R. 3 E., *with an easy chair on his head, which he puts down, not seeing* MARQUISE, *who instantly sits down in it, concealing it completely.*

SAM (*astonished*, R. *corner*). It's the Marquissy. (*Looks at her.*) These here aristocrats are fine women though. Plenty of 'em. (*Describes circle; to* POLLY.) Quality and quantity.

POL. (L. *of table end*). Sam, you'd better come back.

(ECCLES *nudges him and bustles him toward door.*)

SAM (*going toward door, aside*). She's here. What's coming, I wonder!

Exit SAM, R. 3 E. ECCLES *shuts door on him.*

ECC. (*coming down* R. C., *rubbing his hands*). If we'd a-know'd your ladyship had bin a-coming we'd a-had the place cleaned up a bit.

MAR. (*to* ESTHER). You remember me, do you not?

EST. Perfectly, though I only saw you once. (*Seats herself with dignity*, L. C.) May I ask what has procured me the honor of this visit?

MAR. I was informed that you were in want and I came here to offer you assistance.

EST. I thank you for your offer, and the delicate consideration for my feelings with which it is made. I need no assistance.

MAR. A letter I received last night informed me that you did.

EST. May I ask if that letter came from Captain Hawtree?

MAR. No, from this person, your father, I think.

EST. (*to* ECCLES). How dare you interfere in my affairs?

ECC. My love, I did it with the best intentions.

MAR. Then you will not accept assistance from me?

EST. No.

POL. (*aside to* ESTHER, *holding her hand*). Bless you, my darling.

MAR. But you have a child—a son—my grandson. (*With emotion.*)

EST. Master D'Alroy wants for nothing.

POL. And never shall!

MAR. (*showing hood and cloak*). I came here to propose that my grandson should go back with me.

EST. (*rising defiantly*). What, part with my boy? I'd sooner die!

MAR. You can see him when you wish—as for money I——

EST. Not for ten thousand million worlds—not for ten thousand million marchionesses.

ECC. Better do what the good lady asks you, my dear. She's advising you for your good and for the child's likewise.

MAR. Surely you cannot intend to bring up my son's son in a place like this?

(ESTHER *goes up* C.)

ECC. It is a poor place, and we are poor people, sure enough. We ought not to fly in the faces of our pastors and masters—our pastoresses and mistresses.

POL. Oh, hold your tongue, do. (*Goes up to cradle; aside.*) I should like to fly at her.

EST. (*before cradle*). Master George D'Alroy will remain with his mother. The offer to take him from her is an insult to his dead father and to him.

ECC. He don't seem to feel it, stuck up little beast.

MAR. But you have no money. How can you rear him? How can you educate him? How can you live?

EST. (*tearing dress from bandbox*). Turn Columbine! Go on the stage again and dance.

MAR. (*rising*). You are insolent. You forget that I am a lady.

EST. You forget that I am a mother. (*Replaces dress in box.*) Do you dare to offer to buy my child, his breathing image, his living memory, with money? (*Crosses to door* R., *and throws it open.*) There is the door. Go! (*Picture.*)

ECC. (*to* MARQUISE, *who has risen*). Very sorry, my lady, as you should be tret in this way, which was not my wishes.

MAR. Silence! (ECCLES *retreats*, R., *putting back chair;* MARQUISE *goes up to door* R.). Mrs. D'Alroy, if anything could have increased my sorrow for the wretched marriage my poor son was decoyed into, it would be your conduct this day to his mother.

Exit, R. 3 E.

ECC. (*looking after her at door* R. 3 E.). To go away and not leave a damned penny behind her. Cat! cat! stingy cat! (*Crosses to fire* L., *sits and pokes it violently; carriage wheels heard without;* POLLY *goes and kisses* ESTHER *up* C.)

EST. Take me to my room. I'll lie down. Let me have the baby (POLLY *takes it from cradle*) or that old woman may come back and steal him.

Exeunt ESTHER *and* POLLY *with the baby,* R. 3 E.

ECC. (*rocking in chair by fire*). Well, women is the obstinatest devils that never wore horse shoes. (*Strikes table.*) Children! beasts! beasts! (*Rattles fire irons.*)

Enter SAM *and* POLLY, R. 3 E. *They pause up* R. C.

SAM. I'll tell him now and get it over at once. (POLLY *comes down to table, takes bandbox from table and places it up* L. *corner.* SAM *comes down* R. C.) And now, Mr. Eccles, since you've been talking on family affairs, I'd like to have a word with you, so take this opportunity to ——

ECC. (*raising his head sharply*). Take what you like and then order more. (*Rises and down* L.) Samuel Gerridge, that hand is a hand that never turned its back on a friend or a bottle to give him. (*Sings.*) I will stand by my friend, if he'll stand to me, me, gentlemen.

SAM. Well, Mr. Eccles, sir, it's this.

POL. (*aside; coming down* R. *of table*). Don't tell him too sudden, Sam, it might shock his feelings. (*Goes round and sits* L. *of table end.*)

SAM. It's this. You know that for the past four years I've been keeping company with Mary—Polly.

ECC. (*sinking into chair*). Go it, go it. Strike home, young man, strike on this grey head. (*Sings.*) Britons, strike home, home. Here! (*Taps his chest.*) Here, to my heart, don't spare me. (*Goes* C. *and sits in big chair in which the* MARQUISE *sat.*) Have a go at my grey hairs. Pull 'em, pull 'em out, a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together. (*Cries and drops his face in his hands.*)

POL. (*at* L. *of* ECCLES). Oh, father, I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world. (*Hugs and kisses him.*)

SAM (*crossing to* R. *of* ECCLES). Mr. Eccles, I wouldn't wish to annoy you, sir, but now I'm going to enter upon a business. Here's a circular. (*Gives one.*)

ECC. (*indignantly*). What are circulars compared to a fond father's feelings?

SAM. And I wish Polly to name the day, sir, and so I ask you.

ECC. This is 'ard. This is 'ard. *This is 'ard.* One o' my gals marries a so-dger, the other goes a gasfitting.

SAM. The business, which will enable me to maintain a wife, is that of the late Mr. Binks, plumber, glazier, etc.

ECC. (*singing*).

They have given thee to a plumber!
They have broken every vow.
They have given thee to a plumber,
And my heart is breaking now, gentlemen,
My heart is breaking now.

POL. You know, father, you can come and see me.

ECC. (*holding out his hand*). So I can and that's a comfort (*shaking her hand*), and you can see me, and that's a comfort; I'll come and see you often—every day (*shaking* SAM'S *hand*), and crack a fatherly bottle, and shed a friendly tear. (*Rises at* C.)

POL. Do, father, do.

SAM (*with a gulp*). Yes, Mr. Eccles, do (*aside*) not.

ECC. I will. (*He takes the hand of each and goes down with them.*) And this it is to be a father. (*Goes to bureau at* L., *takes hat, puts it on and returns* C.) I would part with any of my children for their own good readily if I was paid for it. (*Sings.*) "For I know that the angels are whispering to me"—*me*, gentlemen.

SAM. I will make Polly a good husband, and anything that I can do to prove it (*lowering his voice*) in the way of spirituous liquors and tobacco (*slipping coin into his hand unseen by* POLLY) shall be done.

ECC. (*lighting up*).

"Be kind to thy father, wherever you be,
For he is a blessing and credit to thee—thee, gentlemen."

Well, my children, bless you; take the blessing of a grey-hair'd father. (POLLY *sobs;* ECCLES *to* SAM.) Samuel Gerridge, she shall be thine. You shall be her husband. I know of no gas-fitter man. (*Looks at money.*) A friend is awaiting for me outside which I want to have a word with (*up* R.), and may you never know how much more sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a marriageable daughter. (*Sings.*)

"When I heard he was married,
I breathed not a tone,
The h'eyes of all round me
Was fixed on my own.
I flew to my chamber
To hide my despair;
I tore the bright circlet
Of gems from my hair,
When I heard she was married.
When I heard she was ——

Exit, *door* R. 3 E.; *outside.*

Married, gentlemen, married."

POL. (*drying her eyes*). There, Sam, I always told you that though father had his faults his heart was in the right place.

SAM. Poor Polly! (*Knock at* R. 3 E.; SAM *sits on table* L.)

POL. Come in!

Enter HAWTREE *in black,* R. 3 E. POLLY *goes to meet him;* SAM *rises and crosses to fireplace at* L., *and stands with back to it.*

HAW. (R. C.). I met the Marquise's carriage on the bridge. Has she been here?

POL. (L. C.). Yes.

HAW. What happened?

POL. Oh, she wanted to take away the child. (*Crosses round to cupboard up* L., *and business of preparing for tea.*)

SAM. In the coach.

HAW. And what did Mrs. D'Alroy say to that?

SAM. Mrs. D'Alroy said she'd see her blow'd first, or words to that effect.

HAW. I am sorry to hear this. I had hoped—however, that's over.

POL. Yes, it's over, and I hope we shall hear no more about it. Want to take away the child indeed! Like her impudence! What next! (*Puts dishes on table.*) Esther's gone to lie down. I shan't wake her up for tea, though she's had nothing to eat all day.

LIGHTS down gradually.

SAM (L. *of table*). Shall I fetch some shrimps?

POL. (L. *of table*). No; what made you think of shrimps?

SAM. They're a relish, and consoling—at least I always find 'em so. (*Goes up and pulls down blind to window in back flat.*)

POL. I won't ask you, Major, to take tea with us, you're too grand.

HAW. (*placing hat on piano*). Not at all; I shall be most happy. (*Aside.*) 'Pon my word, these are a very good sort of people. I'd no idea —— (*Sits* R. *of table,* POLLY *and* SAM, L.)

POL. Sam, light the gas.

SAM. No, don't light up; I like this sort of dusk. It's unbusinesslike but pleasant. (*Puts his arm round her waist.*)

POL. (*making tea*). Sugar, Sam?

SAM (*aside*). Look in the cup.

POL. (*to* HAWTREE, *handing cup*). If you want sweetening, sugar yourself—we've got no milk. It'll be here directly—it's just his time.

VOICE (*outside and rattle of milk pails*). Milk-oow!

POL. There he is. (*Knock at door,* R. 3 E.) Oh, I know, I owe him fourpence. (*Feels her pockets—knock again louder.*) He's very impatient. Come in.

Enter GEORGE, R. 3 E., *his face bronzed and in full health; he has a milk can in his hand, which he carries to upper end of table.* POLLY *is in the act of raising her teacup to her lips; pauses with it half-way there, raises her eyes slowly and sees* GEORGE. *Stares at him thinking him a ghost, slowly puts cup back on table without taking her eyes from* GEORGE'S *face, and slowly slides under the table.* SAM *is eating his bread and butter, noting nothing until* POLLY *slips under the table. He looks up in surprise, gasps, chokes, and terrified, dives under table after* POLLY. HAWTREE, *marking* SAM'S *fixed stare as he disappears, turns his chair and looks. Remains fixed a moment. Picture.*

GEO. (*quietly*). A fella hung this on the railings, so I thought I'd bring it in. (*Places can on table.*) What's the matter with you all?

HAW. (*rising*). George!

GEO. (L. C.). Hawtree! you here? (*They shake hands vigorously.*)

POL. (*peeping out*). O-o-o-o-oh! The ghost! The ghost!

SAM (*under table*). It shan't hurt you, Polly. Perhaps it's only indigestion.

HAW. (R. C.). Then you're not dead?

GEO. Dead! no! Where's my wife?

HAW. You were reported killed.

GEO. It wasn't true!

HAW. Alive, my old friend, alive!

GEO. And well. (*Shakes hands again.*) Landed this morning. Where's my wife? (*Looks about.*)

SAM (*who has popped his head from under table-cloth*). He isn't dead, Poll, he's alive! (*Pause; comes out.*)

POL. (*crawling out from under table aided by* SAM). Alive! My dear George! Oh, my dear brother! (*Down* L., *looks at him intently.*) Alive! (*Hysterically, goes to him.*) Oh, my dear, dear, dear brother! (*In his arms.*) How could you go and do so?

(SAM *down* L. GEORGE *places* POLLY *in his arms.*)

GEO. (C.). Where's Esther?

HAW. (R.). Here—in this house.

GEO. Here! Doesn't she know I'm back?

POL. (L. C.). No! how should she?

GEO. (*to* HAWTREE). Didn't you get my telegram?

HAW. No. Where from?

GEO. Southampton. I sent it to the club.

HAW. (*crossing behind to fireplace*, L.). I haven't been there these three days.

POL. (*gushingly*). Oh, my dear, dear, dear, dead and gone, come back all alive brother George! (*Falls into his arms at* C.)

(GEORGE *passes her down to* R. C.)

SAM (*crossing* C.). Glad to see you, sir.

GEO. Thank you, Gerridge. (*Shakes hands.*) Same to you. But Esther!

(SAM *down* R. C., *to* POLLY.)

POL. (*back to audience and kerchief to her eyes*). She's asleep in her room. (GEORGE *is going* R. 3 E. POLLY *stops him.*) You mustn't see her.

GEO. Not see her after this long absence! Why not?

HAW. She's so ill to-day; she has been greatly excited. The news of your death, which we all mourned, has shaken her terribly.

GEO. Poor girl! poor girl!

POL. Oh! we all cried so when you died (*crying*), and now you're alive again I want to cry ever so much more. (*Cries.*)

HAW. We must break the news to her by degrees.

SAM. If we turn the tap on its full pressure she'll explode. (*Goes up.*)

GEO. To return and not to be able to see her, to love her, to kiss her! (*Stamps.*)

POL. Hush!

GEO. I forgot, I should wake her!

POL. (*wiping her eyes*). More than that—you'll wake the baby.

GEO. (*wheeling about, astonished*). Baby! What baby?

POL. Yours.

GEO. Mine!

POL. Yes, yours and Esther's. Why, didn't you know there was a baby? La, the ignorance of these men!

HAW. Yes, George, you're a father.

GEO. Why wasn't I told this? Why didn't you write?

POL. How could we when you were dead?

SAM. And hadn't left your address.

GEO. If I can't see Esther I will see the child. The sight of me won't be too much for its nerves. Where is it?

POL. Sleeping in its mother's arms. (GEORGE *goes to door* R. 3 E.; *they stop him,* POLLY *on* R., SAM *on* L., *and bring him down* C. *again.*) Please not! Please not!

GEO. I must! I will!

POL. It might kill her, and you wouldn't like to do that. I'll fetch the baby, but oh, please don't make a noise.

Exit, R. 3 E.

GEO. (C.). My baby, my ba—— It's a dream. You've seen it. What's it like?

SAM (R.). Oh, it's like a—like a sort of—infant, white and milky, and all that.

Enter POLLY, R. 3 E., *with baby wrapped in shawl;* GEORGE *meets* POLLY, C., *up stage, and they come down together.*

POL. (R. C.). Gently, gently, take care. (*Gives child to* GEORGE.) Esther will hardly have it touched.

GEO. (L. C.). But I'm its father.

POL. That don't matter. She's very particular.

GEO. Boy or girl?

POL. Guess.

GEO. Boy? (POLLY *nods;* GEORGE *enraptured.*) What's its name?

POL. Guess.

GEO. George? (POLLY *nods.*) Eustace? (POLLY *nods.*) Fairfax? Algernon? (POLLY *nods; pause.*) My names.

SAM (*coming up behind* POLLY *at* R. *to look on*). There don't seem room enough in him, sir, to hold so many names, do there?

(HAWTREE *comes up behind* GEORGE, *on* L.)

GEO. (*to baby*). To come back all the way from India to find that I'm dead, and that you're alive! To find my wife a widow with a new love, aged—how old are you? I'll buy you a pony to-morrow, my brave little boy. What's his weight? I should say two pound nothing. You *are* a surprise, my —— (*Affected; touches him.*) Take him away, Polly, for fear I should bend him.

(POLLY *takes child and places it in cradle.*)

HAW. (*crossing to* R. *and sitting at piano;* SAM *takes his place*). But tell us how it is you're back, how you escaped.

GEO. (R. C., *coming down*). Too long a story just now, by and by. Tell *me* all about it. (POLLY *gives him chair,* R. C., *and returns to table,* L.) How is it Esther's living here?

POL. (L. *of table; after a pause*). She came back here after the child was born, and the furniture was sold up.

GEO. (*sitting*). Sold up! What furniture?

POL. That you bought for her.

HAW. It couldn't be helped, George; Mrs. D'Alroy was so poor.

GEO. Poor! but I left her six hundred pounds to put in the bank.

HAW. We must tell you; she gave it to her father, who banked it in his own name.

SAM. And lost it in betting; every copper.

GEO. Then she's been in want?

POL. No, not in want; friends lent her money.

GEO. What friends? (*Pause; to* HAWTREE, *who rises embarrassed.*) You?

POL. Yes.

GEO. (*rising and shaking* HAWTREE'S *hand*). Thank you, old fella.

(HAWTREE *goes up.*)

SAM (*aside*). Who'd ha' thought that long swell had it in him! He never mentioned it.

GEO. So papa Eccles had the money?

SAM. And blowed it.

POL. (*pleadingly, both hands on end of table*). You see father was very unlucky on the race course. He told us that if it hadn't been that all his calculations were upset by a horse winning that had no business to, he should have made all our fortunes. Father's been unlucky, and he gets tipsy at times, but he's a very clever man, if you only give him scope enough.

SAM (*aside*). I'd give him scope enough!

GEO. Where is he now?

SAM. Public-house.

GEO. And how is he?

SAM. Drunk!

GEO. (*rising, going up; to* HAWTREE). You were right. There is something in Caste. (*Aloud.*) But tell us about it. (*Down* C.)

POL. Well, you know you went away, and then the baby was born. Oh! he was such a sweet little thing—just like—your eyes ——

GEO. Cut that.

POL. Well, baby came, and when baby was six days old your letter came, Major. (*To* HAWTREE.) I saw it was from India, and that it wasn't in your hand. (*To* GEORGE.) I guessed what was inside it, so I opened it unknown to her, and I read there of your capture and death. I daren't tell her. I went to father to ask his advice, but he was too tipsy to understand me. Sam fetched the doctor. He told us that the news would kill her. When she woke up she said she had dreamt there was a letter from you. I told her no, and day after day she asked for a letter. So the doctor advised us to write one as if it came from you. So we did, Sam and I, and

the doctor told her—told Esther, I mean—that her eyes were bad and she mustn't read, and we read our letter to her, didn't we, Sam? But bless you, she always knew it hadn't come from you. At last when she was stronger we told her all.

GEO. (*after a pause*). How did she take it?

POL. She pressed the baby in her arms and turned her face to the wall. (*A pause;* GEORGE *sits* R. C.) Well, to make a long story short, when she got up she found that father had lost all her money you left her. There was a dreadful scene between them. She told him he had robbed her and her child, and father left the house and swore he'd never come back again.

SAM. Don't be alarmed. He did come back.

POL. Oh, yes. He was too good-hearted to stop away from his children long. He has his faults, but his good points, when you find them, are wonderful.

SAM (*aside*). Yes, when you do find them.

POL. So she had to come back here to us, and that's all.

GEO. Why didn't she write to my mother?

POL. Father wanted her, but she was too proud. She said she'd die first.

GEO. (*rising; paces up to* HAWTREE). There's a woman! Caste's all humbug! (*Paces excitedly down* C.; *sees sword over mantelpiece.*) That's my sword and a map of India—and that's the piano I bought her. I'll swear to the silk!

POL. Yes, that was bought in at the sale.

GEO. (*to* HAWTREE). Thank you, old fellow.

HAW. Not by me. I was in India at the time.

GEO. By whom, then?

POL. By Sam. (SAM *winks to her to discontinue.*) I shall. He knew Esther was breaking her heart about any one else having it, so he took the money he'd saved up for our wedding, and we're going to be married now, ain't we, Sam?

SAM (*coming* L. C. *to* POLLY). And hope by a constant attention to business to merit ——

(POLLY *pushes him away.*)

POL. She's never touched the piano since you died; but if I don't play to-night may I die an old maid. (*Goes up and clears table;* HAWTREE *returns down* R., *eyeing* SAM.)

(GEORGE *crosses to* SAM *and shakes his hand, then goes up stage, pulls up blind and looks into street;* SAM *finishes tea.*)

HAW. (*aside*). Who'd have thought that little cad had it in him! He never mentioned it. (*Aloud.*) Apropos, George, your mother. I'll go to the square, and tell her of—— (*Takes hat from piano.*)

GEO. (C.). Is she in town?

HAW. Yes. Will you come with me?

GEO. And leave my wife! And such a wife!

HAW. I'll go at once. I shall catch her before dinner. Good-bye, old fellow; seeing you back again alive, and well, makes me feel quite—that I quite feel—— (*Shakes* GEORGE'S *hand, goes to door* R., *then crosses to* L. *to* SAM.) Mr. Gerridge, I fear I have often made myself very offensive to you.

SAM. Well, sir, you have.

HAW. I feared so; I didn't know you then; I beg your pardon; let me ask you to shake hands, forgive me and forget it. (*Offers his hand.*)

SAM (*taking it*). Say no more, sir, and if ever I've made myself disagreeable to you, I ask your pardon, forget it and forgive me. (*They shake hands warmly.*) And when you marry that young lady as I know you're engaged to, if you should furnish a house and require anything in my way—— (*Brings out circular;* POLLY *comes down* L., *and pushes him away; he puts circular in his pocket and stands before fire.*)

HAW. (*up* R.). Good-bye, George, for the present. Bye, Polly. (*Resumes his Pall Mall manner as he goes out.*) I'm off to the square.

Exit, R. 3 E.

GEO. But Esther!

POL. (*finishing at table*). I'll tell her all about it.

GEO. How?

POL. I don't know; but it will come. Providence will send it to me as it has sent you, my dear brother. You must go. (*Crosses* C.) Esther will be getting up directly. (*Pushes him up to door* R. 3 E.; GEORGE *edges down to* R. 1 E. *and peers through keyhole.*) It's no use looking there; it's dark! (*Pushes him up stage.*)

GEO. (*at door*). It isn't often a man can see his own widow.

POL. And it isn't often that he wants to. Now go away. (*Pushes him off.*)

GEO. (*coming back*). I shall stop outside.

READY lights.

SAM. And I'll whistle for you when you may come in. (*Crosses* C.)

POL. Now!

GEO. Oh! my Esther! When you know I'm alive I'll marry you all over again, and have a second honeymoon!

(*They force him* off, R. 3 E.)

POL. (*coming down*). Now, Sam, light the gas. I'm going to wake her up. Oh, my darling, if I dare tell you. (*Whispers.*) He's come back! He's come back! He's come back! Alive! Alive! Alive! Sam, kiss me! (*Kisses* SAM *and* goes off, R. 1 E.)

SAM (*dancing shutter dance*). I'm glad the swells are gone; now I can open my safety valve and let my feelings escape. (*Lights gas.*)

LIGHTS full on.

To think of his coming back alive from India, just as I'm going to open my shop. (*Lights candles.*) Perhaps he'll get me the patronage of the Royal Family. It'd look stunning over the door with a lion and a unicorn a-standing on their hind legs doing nothing furiously with a lozenge between them. (*Sits at table,* L.) Poor Esther, to think of my knowing her when she was in the ballet line, then when she was in the honorable line, then a mother. Then a widow and in the ballet line again. And him to come back (*growing affected*), and find a baby with all his furniture and fittings ready for immediate use. And the poor thing lying asleep with her eyelids hot and swollen—not knowing that that great, big, heavy, hulking, overgrown dragoon is prowling outside ready to fly at her lips, and strangle her in his strong, loving arms. It—it—it —— (*Breaks down and sobs with his head upon the table.*)

Enter POLLY, R. 1 E., *with a light colored dress on.*

POL. Why, Sam, what's the matter?

SAM (*rising and crossing* R.). The water's got into my meter.

POL. Hush!

Enter ESTHER, R. 1 E.; *they stop suddenly;* POLLY *down stage.*

SAM (*up stage, singing and dancing*). Tiddy-ti-tum-lo!

EST. (*sitting down near fire* L. *of head of table, taking up costume and beginning to work;* POLLY *going to her and kissing her between laughing and crying*). Sam, you seem in high spirits to-night.

SAM (*crossing to* L.). Yes; you see Polly and I are going to be married, and—and hope by bestowing a favor to merit, to continuance, attention, by deserving a merit ——

POL. (*kissing* ESTHER *two or three times, then pushing* SAM *down stage to* L.). What are you talking about? (*Comes down and sits on music stool,* R.)

SAM. I don't know. I'm off my burner.

EST. What's the matter with you to-night, dear? (*To* POLLY.) I can see something in your eye.

SAM. It's the new furniture.

POL. (*crossing hurriedly and kissing* ESTHER *again; taking waist of dress and sitting* L. *of table to help on it*). It was a pretty dress when it was new; not unlike the one Mdlle. Delphine used to wear. (*Suddenly claps her hands.*) Oh!

EST. What's the matter?

POL. A needle! (*Aside to* SAM, *who comes to her,* L.) I've got it.

SAM (*leaning over her*). The needle in your finger?

POL. No, an idea in my head.

SAM (*still looking at finger*). Does it hurt?

POL. (*rising, crossing* C.). Stupid! (SAM *crosses to* R.; *aloud.*) Do you recollect Mdlle. Delphine, Esther?

EST. Yes.

POL. Do you recollect her in that ballet that old Herr Griffenhaagen arranged—"Jeanne la Folle, or the Return of the Soldier"?

(SAM *sits* R., *on music stool.*)

EST. Yes. Will you do the fresh hem?

POL. What's the use? Let me see—how did it go? (*Business of indicating the details of an imaginary stage.*) How well I remember the scene. The cottage that side, the bridge at the back. La! La! La! Ballet of villagers and the entrance of Delphine as Jeanne the bride. (*Sings and pantomimes.*) Then the entrance of Claude the bridegroom. Then there was the procession to church. The march of the soldiers over the bridge. (*Sings and pantomimes.*) Arrest of Claude, who is drawn for the conscription (*business, and* ESTHER *looks dreamily*), and is torn from the arms of his bride

at the church porch. Omnes broken-hearted! This is Omnes broken-hearted. (*Pantomimes.*)

EST. Polly, I don't like this; it brings back memories.

POL. (*going to table and leaning her hands on it looking over at* ESTHER). Oh! fuss about memories. One can't mourn forever. (ESTHER *surprised.*) Everything in this world isn't sad. There's bad news, and—and there's good news sometimes when we least expect it.

EST. Ah! Not for me.

POL. Why not? (*Pause; crosses to* C.) Ding, ling, ling a ling.

SAM. What's that?

POL. Why, the second act, you know—second act, winter. (*Places* SAM *at* R.) The village cross—this is the village cross. Entrance of Jeanne—now called Jeanne la Folle, because she has gone mad. This is Jeanne gone mad. (*Pantomimes.*) Gone mad on account of the supposed loss of her husband.

SAM. The supposed loss?

POL. The supposed loss.

EST. (*dropping costume*). Polly!

SAM. Mind!

POL. Mustn't stop now; go on. Entrance of Claude, who isn't dead, in a captain's uniform—a cloak over his shoulder. Don't you recollect the ballet? Jeanne is mad and can't recognize her husband, and don't till he shows her the ribbon she gave him when they were betrothed. Here, I'll do it. I want a bit of ribbon. (*Looks about.*) Sam, have you got a bit of ribbon? (*Casts eyes on sword knot over fireplace.*) Ah! reach me that crape sword knot, that will do. (*Crosses* R.; SAM *goes up* L. C.)

EST. Touch that! (*Rises and comes down* L. C.)

POL. Why not? It's no use now.

EST. (C.). You have heard of George! I know you have! I see it in your eyes! You may tell me! I can bear it! I can, indeed!—indeed I can! Tell me! He is not dead!

POL. No!

EST. (*whispering*). Thank heaven! Are you sure?

POL. Quite.

EST. You've seen him! I see you have! I know it! I feel it! I had a bright and happy dream of him—I saw him as I slept. Oh! let me know if he is near! (*Paces stage,* L. *to* R.) Give me some sign, some sound—(POLLY *opens piano*) some token of his life and presence.

(POLLY *signals to* SAM; POLLY *plays piano on the treble only;* SAM *goes to* R. 3 E.)

EST. (*in an ecstasy*). Oh, my husband! Come to me, for I know that you are near! Let me feel your arms clasp round me! Do not fear for me! I can bear the sight of you! It will not kill me! George—love—husband—come! Oh, come to me! (*During this* GEORGE *has* appeared *at* R. D., *and running to* ESTHER *enfolds her in his embrace.* POLLY *plays the bass as well as treble of the air forte, then fortissimo; she then plays at random, endeavoring to hide her tears; at last she strikes piano wildly, and goes off into a fit of hysterical laughter, to the alarm of* SAM, *who places her gently on the floor.* GEORGE *and* ESTHER *go up* C. *to cradle.*)

SAM. Polly! Polly! my darling!

(POLLY *seizes* SAM *by the hair and shakes him violently.*)

POL. Sam, Sam, I'm going mad!

EST. To see you here again, to feel your warm breath upon my cheek! Is it real? Am I not dreaming? (*Comes down.*)

SAM (L., *rubbing his head*). No, it's real.

(POLLY *sits at piano,* SAM *beside her.*)

EST. (*placing chair* C., *and kneeling on his left*). But tell us, tell us, do, darling, how you escaped.

GEO. It's a long story, but I'll condense it. I was riding out and suddenly found myself surrounded and taken prisoner. One of the troop that took me was a fella who had been my servant, and to whom I had done some little kindness; he helped me to escape and hid me in a sort of cave, and for a long time used to bring me food. Unfortunately, he was ordered away, so he brought another Sepoy to look after me. I felt from the first this man meant to betray me, and I watched him like a lynx during the one day he was with me. As evening drew on a Sepoy picket was passing; I could tell by the look in the fella's eyes he meant to call out as soon as they were near enough, so I seized him by the throat and shook the life out of him.

EST. You strangled him?

GEO. Yes.

EST. Killed him dead?

GEO. He didn't get up again.

POL. (*to* SAM). You never go and kill Sepoys!

SAM. I pay rates and taxes.

GEO. The day after Havelock and his Scotchmen marched through the village, and I turned out to meet them. I was too done up to join, so I was sent straight on to Calcutta. I got leave, took a berth on the P. and O. boat—the passage restored me. I landed this morning, came on here and brought in the milk. (*Embraces* ESTHER, *and rises.*)

Enter *the* MARQUISE, R. 3 E. ; *she rushes to embrace* GEORGE, C.

MAR. My dear boy! My dear, dear boy!

POL. (*seated* R.). Why, see, she's crying. She's glad to see him alive and back. (*Rises.*)

SAM (*profoundly*). There's always something good in women, even when they're ladies. (POLLY *and he cross to* L. ; POLLY *puts dress in box and goes to cradle.*)

MAR. (*crossing to* ESTHER, L. C.). My dear daughter, we must forget our little differences. (*Kisses her.*) Won't you? How history repeats itself! You will find a similar and as unexpected a return mentioned by Froissart in the chapter that treats of Philip Dartnell.

GEO. Yes, mother. I remember. (*Kisses her.*)

MAR. (*to* GEORGE, *aside*). We'll take her abroad and make a lady of her.

GEO. Can't, mamma. She's ready made. Nature has done it to our hands.

MAR. (*aside to* GEORGE). But I won't have the man who smells of putty, nor the man who smells of beer. (*Goes up to cradle with* ESTHER.)

Enter HAWTREE, *very pale.*

HAW. (R. C.). George! Oh, the Marchioness is here.

GEO. (L. C.). What's the matter?

HAW. Oh, nothing. Yes, there is. I don't mind telling you. Why, I've been thrown. I called at my chambers as I came along and found this. (*Gives* GEORGE *a note.*)

GEO. From the Countess, Lady Florence, mother. (*Reads.*) "Dear Major Hawtree,—I hasten to inform you that my daughter, Florence, is about to enter upon an alliance with Lord Saxeby, the eldest son of the Marquis of Loamshire. Under these circumstances should you think fit to call here again I feel assured ——" Well, perhaps it's for the best. (*Returns letter.*) Caste, you know, Caste, and a marquis is a bigger swell than a major.

HAW. (*on music stool*, R.). Best to marry in your own rank of life.

GEO. (C.). Yes. If you can find *the* girl. But if ever you find *the* girl marry her. As to her station, "Kind hearts are more than coronets, and simple faith than Norman blood."

HAW. Yaas. But a gentleman should hardly ally himself to a nobody.

GEO. My dear fellow, nobody's a mistake. He don't exist. Nobody's nobody. Everybody's somebody.

HAW. Yes. But still, Caste ——

GEO. Oh, Caste's all right. Caste is a good thing if it's not carried too far. It shuts the door on the pretentious and the vulgar, but it should open the door very wide for exceptional merit. Let brains break through its barriers, and what brains can break through love may leap over.

HAW. Why, George, you're quite inspired; quite an orator. What makes you so brilliant? your captivity, the voyage? what then?

GEO. I'm in love with my wife!

Enter ECCLES, R. 3 E., *drunk, a bottle of gin in his hand.*

ECC. (*crossing to head of table up* L.). Bless this happy company. Polly, my love, fetch some wine glasses—a tumbler will do for me. Let me drink a toast. Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I propose the 'elth of our newly returned warrior, *my son* (MARQUISE *shivers*), the Right Honorable George D'Alroy. Get glasses, Polly, and send for a bottle of sherry wine for my ladyship. My ladyship (*crossing to* MARQUISE *round* R. *of table*), we old folks must drink to wish the young ones happy. So delighted to see you under these altered circum—circum—circum—Stangate—No—no—not ——

SAM. Unscrew his head and put it in a bucket!

Exit, *in disgust, door* R. 3 E.

WARN curtain.

HAW. (*crossing* R. C., *aside to* GEORGE). I think I can abate this nuisance, at least I can remove it. (*Crosses* C., *to* ECCLES.) Mr. Eccles, don't you think that with your talent for liquor if you had an allowance of about two pounds a week and went to Jersey, where spirits are cheap, that you could drink yourself to death in a year?

Ecc. I think I could. I'm sure—I'll try. (*Goes up* R. *of table, steadying himself by it, and sits in chair by fire, with the bottle of gin.*)

Pol. Yes, dear, we can see each other, but we won't be any bother to you. You can come and see us as often as you like, but we won't return the visit.

Est. (*aside; kissing* Polly). She'll marry a workman and live in a back shop. I wonder if she'll be happy? (*Returns to* Marquise *at cradle.*)

Pol. (*watching her; aside*). And she'll be a lady with a coach and live with great folk. I wonder if she'll be happy?

Geo. (*coming down* C. *with* Esther). Come and play me that air that used to ring in my ears when I lay awake night after night captive in the cave. You know. (*He hands* Esther *to piano, she plays the air.*)

RING curtain.

Mar. (*bending over the cradle at end,* R.). My grandson!

(Eccles *falls off the chair in the last stage of drunkenness, bottle in hand.* Hawtree, *leaning on mantelpiece by the other side of fire, looks at him through eye-glass.* Sam **enters** *and goes to* Polly, *up* C., *behind cradle, and producing wedding ring from several papers holds it up before her eyes. Piano till end.*)

SLOW CURTAIN

POSITIONS

Marquise (*by cradle.*)

(*Piano*) George. Polly. Sam. Eccles.
Esther. Hawtree.

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